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THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

JANUARY 15 1982

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Between intellect and imagination

By E. H. Gombrich

MARTIN KEMP:

Leonardo da Vinci
The Marvelous Works of Nature
and Man
384pp. Dent. £14.95.
0 460 04354 4

In recent years observers of the art-historical scene have sometimes sensed the danger of an increasing failure of nerve among the newcomers to the field. What had started as a healthy reaction against the timorous enthusiasm of the old guard into rigid professionalism which excluded the tackling of any theme demanding a grasp of wider issues. Martin Kemp's excellent monograph on Leonardo da Vinci must dispel any such fears. His sensitive and original descriptions of the master's paintings and his evident familiarity with the traditions of medieval and Renaissance science justify his stated hope of combining the achievements of Kenneth Clark's classic on the artist with V. P. Zubov's unsurpassed account of the scientist in the context of his age.

What has made this enterprise possible is the advance which has been achieved during the past few decades in the dating of Leonardo's notes and drawings. Thanks, largely, to Lord Clark's catalogue of the drawings at Windsor Castle and the researches of Carlo Pedretti, evidence from paper, handwriting, even ink can now be used to establish the chronology of the notebooks. Hence the classic anthologies of his writings by J. P. Richter and E. MacCurdy, which present Leonardo's researches and reflections according to their subject matter, are seen to be somewhat misleading where they juxtapose early jottings with his mature thoughts on the same topic. Profiting from this new framework Professor Kemp has been able to offer the reader a narrative of the artist's life together with a fresh interpretation of his inner development, and in doing so, he has looked again at many of the problems of Leonardo's oeuvre and career.

Dividing his book into five chapters, Kemp calls the first "Leonardo the Florentine" to stress the master's intellectual roots in the city of Brunelleschi, the great architect,

sculptor, inventor of scientific perspective and engineer, and the environment of the Pollaiuoli, whose oeuvre testifies to a firm grasp of human anatomy. Kemp shows that the emphasis on sculpture in Verrocchio's workshop in all likelihood exerted a lasting influence on the pupil's ability to visualize forms in space, despite his later preference for the art of painting. He offers convincing reasons for dating the angel in Verrocchio's "Baptism" later than the Uffizi "Annunciation", where he brings out the contrast between the fine detail and the awkward construction. There are eloquent pages on Leonardo's unfinished "Adoration" of 1481 which stress the novelty of his methods of drawing and sketching: "The flow of his thought descended onwards in a rough and tumble of ideas, sometimes splashing off in unexpected directions - unexpected, we may suspect, even to Leonardo himself." Emphasis upon this fluency and flux in Leonardo's project enables the author to keep his own interpretations fluid also, hinting at possible connections and associations in the symbolism of the composition without presenting them as established facts. It is a method which stands him in good stead in the later chapters.

The complexity of the story Kemp has to tell compels him to divide the most fertile of Leonardo's periods, the eighteen years he spent in Milan, not so much chronologically as systematically. Having paid due tribute to the Louvre "Virgin of the Rocks" and its artistic and spiritual significance, he shows us the natural movement of Leonardo's mind from architecture to engineering (including plans for the construction of a "bird"), and on to investigations of the human body, its sense organs, the action of light and the laws of mechanics coupled with his interest in geometry stimulated by Luca Pacioli, with less stress on the astounding diversity of his interests than on their underlying unity.

Those authors who have written that Leonardo began by studying things as an artist but increasingly investigated things for their own sake have missed the point entirely. What should be said is that he increasingly investigated each thing

for each other's sake, for the sake of the whole and for the sake of the inner unity, which he perceived both intuitively and consciously.

It is for this reason that Kemp has called this chapter "The Microcosm", since in his interpretation the old doctrine of the correspondence between man as a little world and the universe as a macrocosm provided Leonardo with a unifying principle. Though the artist often expressed his contempt for mere book learning and claimed to rely on "experience" alone, we have long since learnt, in Kemp's words, that "observation requires a structured



The "Benois Madonna" of c. 1480, in the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. context to acquire meaning, and exposition of its significance can only take place within a system of shared reference." It was this necessity, which launched Leonardo on the uphill path of mastering traditional disciplines which were usually accessible only in Latin texts.

In an early anatomical drawing, one of the imaginary "ventricles" of the brain is reserved by Leonardo for both the intellect and the imagination, *fantasia*, a departure from tradition which has led Kemp to devote his next chapter to the "Exercise of *fantasia*". Here he introduces the reader to the admitted entertainer of the Sforza Court, devoting

pageants and stage effects, improving music, telling fables and inventing emblems and allegories of astounding intricacy. Emphasizing the rule of Vigevano (the Sforza's country retreat south-west of Milan), Kemp suggests that Leonardo may well have contributed to the amenities and the charm of the place. But today his activities as a court artist can best be grasped in considering the ruined murals of the Sala delle Asse in the Castello which are here analysed with much tact and imagination for their possible emblematic allusions and artistic import. The chapter includes a refreshing account of the "Last Supper" and its perspectival subtleties; a vivid appreciation of the "Lady with the Ermine"; and a discussion of the artistic and technical problems of the colossal monument in Francesco Sforza in which so much new light has been shed by one of the newly found Madrid notebooks.

Inevitably the next chapter, entitled "The Republic: New Battles and Old Problems", reflects the fragmentation of Leonardo's life after his departure from Milan in 1500, when he was tossed about by the political storms of the age as well as his own restlessness. He undertook and abandoned artistic and military enterprises for the Florentine Republic, accompanied Cesare Borgia on his campaigns, returned to Milan, left and returned again, while remaining elusive all the time to would-be patrons who wanted works from his brush. Not even Kemp can weave a wholly integrated narrative out of this tangled skein, but he compensates for this lack of unity through his thoughtful discussion of individual problems, the cartoons for the "St Anne", the "Battle of Anghiari", the geometrical studies, the dissections, and finally the "portrait of a Lady on a balcony" (as he prefers to call the "Mona Lisa"), suggesting convincingly that this most famous of all the master's works may have been begun by him in Florence as a portrait of a particular sitter, but retained to be revised and reworked over the years till it crystallized into that image of mythical power, the counterpart in the painter's oeuvre of the lost "Leda" celebrating the mystery of beauty and the beauty of mystery.

In the author's interpretation this sense of mystery came to the fore in the last decade of Leonardo's life. He takes us from the problem of the "Rocks", which, as he says, has become more and more complex through the recent discovery of archival material, but in which he still wants to see evidence of the master's handiwork, to the Trivulzio monument and the late manuscript and drawings dating from Leonardo's stays in Milan, Rome and France. Outwardly these are years of recapitulation and systematization comprising the ambitious project for an anatomical atlas, a study of the movement of water of which the Codex Leicester (now Codex Hammer) gives a good idea, and (partly) the *Trattato della Pittura*, with its sections on the behaviour of light. But psychologically, as the author shows, these were also times of resignation and retreat: the more the master extended his grasp of a subject the further did his goal of total comprehension recede.

That analogy between the macrocosm and the microcosm on which he had relied in his earlier years proved inadequate to account for the movement of the blood in the body and the water in the universe. "There is something heroic", writes the author, "in this rejection of a theory which he had cherished for so many years." "Ultimately", we learn also, the beguiling goal of the late anatomies - the marriage of organic complexity and mathematical certainty in the context of mechanical law - proved to be elusive for the most part. At the same time the contradictory traditions on which he had drawn in his superhuman attempt to classify and explain the infinite shapes of waves and vortices refused to jell and forced him to admit defeat. But Kemp also shows that these intense efforts brought Leonardo into contact with the most advanced thinkers on this problem.

He stresses the link between Leonardo's reflections on compound motion and those of Nicolaus d'Oresme, who discussed the example of an arrow shot into the air from a moving ship and landing again on the deck. The medieval author, we read, used the example to present the argument for the possibility of a diurnal rotation of the

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earth, but Kemp does not mention that this connection may at last furnish an explanation of one of Leonardo's most enigmatic notes in a late anatomical manuscript, the laconic sentence "the sun does not move". The unlikelihood of Leonardo having anticipated Copernicus has made some scholars propose that he was not talking about the real sun at all, but about a pageant - a most unsatisfactory proposal, for why should the planet sun remain stationary in a pageant if it was thought to move in the Universe? But if the note refers to the diurnal rather than the annual motion of the earth, it might indicate that Leonardo took sides where the French bishop hesitated to commit himself - an important step indeed, but quite unrelated to the Copernican system.

If Leonardo had admitted this complication it would fit the picture of his late thought which Kemp presents in his account of the artist's studies of the eye and the nature of light. "It is a measure of his intellectual integrity," Kemp again comments, "that he allowed his optical studies to disturb the attractively tidy assumptions he had adopted as a painter-perspectivist." He was now attracted by "the infinite varieties of the visible world, its illusions, ambiguities, deceptions and fleeting subtleties." His late studies of trees and of light playing on their foliage are a case in point, just as his famous "deluge" series is evidence of Leonardo's continued striving for a comprehension of those creative and destructive forces which pervade the universe. Perhaps his last painting, of St John the Baptist, captures something of the enigma which confronted Leonardo and which continues to confront us in his own personality.

It is not lack of gratitude and appreciation which makes one pause once in a while, and ask whether the author's very fluency, his method of *summo*, has not occasionally tempted him into telling the outlines of this enigma. For the closer one tries to get to Leonardo, the more puzzling he becomes. One aspect of this puzzle is apparent to anyone who turns the pages of his notebooks in any facile edition.

Indeed it might be helpful to newcomers if Kemp, in a future edition of this book, prefaced his narrative with a brief account of these extraordinary documents. The same page will often exhibit an exasperating jumble of topics and trivia together with a dogged persistence in arriving at the formulation of a thought that had pursued Leonardo for years. Conversely we find sheets of drawings in which fleeting ideas for any number of images are started and abandoned, while a trivial doodle of Leonardo's "favourite" "nutcracker face" is meticulously finished and shaded. At times he would give free rein to his *fantasia* only to tighten the reins suddenly, as if to discipline

it beyond endurance. That he advised artists to let their imagination be stimulated by patchy walls is a familiar fact; it is less well known that for him the condition of talent in a boy was not his inventiveness but his capacity to "finish a drawing with shading".

No doubt it is the tension between these two tendencies which accounts for Leonardo's most notorious weakness, his apparent inability to complete any work in hand. It is a weakness already remarked upon by the Florentine humanist Ugolino Verina at a time when Leonardo was in his thirties. Paying a poetic tribute to the artist of his time (not quoted by Kemp), Verino wrote: "Perhaps Leonardo da Vinci surpasses all the others, but he does not know how to take his hand from the pen, and like Proteus spends many years in perfecting one." The criticism is modelled on a remark attributed to Apelles by Pliny, but its truth was and remained only too apparent. Maybe Verino was here alluding to the "Adoration of the Magi", for which the artist's ideas flowed so abundantly and which he left unfinished. The dreamlike plenitude of inventions he crowded into the underpainting makes us forget to ask whether even Leonardo could have turned these poetic suggestions into a finished painting without packing it too tightly. He was later to warn painters not to impede the flux of their inventions by premature finish. But his insistence on standards of completion, both in his writings and in his paintings, makes one doubt if he could ever have brought his composition of the "Battle of Anghiari"

to a successful conclusion. He would have had to follow, for instance, advice from his own *Treatise on Painting*.

If you depict horses running away, paint them with little clouds of dust as far apart as are the intervals between the impact of their hooves; and the cloud that is farthest from the horse is least visible, as well as high, scattered and thin, while the one that is nearest to it will be most visible, small and dense.

This advice was combined with observations on how to differentiate these clouds of dust from the smoke of artillery "which will be bluer". But how are we to relate this to the way he combined his apocalyptic visions with as almost pedantic insistence on the laws of optics?

When the flashes caused by the belts of heaven were reflected there were seen as many highlights on the waves... as there were waves to reflect them to the eyes of those who stood around, and the number of these reflections was diminished in proportion as they were nearer to the eye.

Surely the wonder is not that Leonardo finished so few of his projects, but that he left enough masterpieces to mark an epoch in the history of art.

No doubt, however, Isabella d'Este's Florentine correspondent was right when he held out little hope that she would obtain one of these rare creations "since Leonardo is working hard at geometry and has no patience with the brush". How much patience he could summon for

this alternative pursuit only becomes clear to those who turn the pages of the *Codex Atlanticus*. Even Kemp, who has so much empathy, throws up the sponge in a fit of impatience:

His geometromantic desire at this time to discover ever more intricate relationships of area between circles, triangles, squares, polygons, segments, sectors, falcat triangles and lunules became an intellectual itch he found impossible to scratch satisfactorily. Each new bout of scratching stimulated fresh itches. Even the most devout admirer of Leonardo must wonder if the whole matter had not got out of hand.

The witty piece of irreverence certainly brings light relief into a serious and difficult study, but is it justified? If Kemp was right, in the passage quoted earlier, that Leonardo "investigated each thing for each other's sake and for the sake of the inner unity he perceived", may this search not also offer the key to these exasperating obsessions? It is likely that all these investigations are connected, directly or indirectly, with the notorious problems of squaring the circle. Success in this enterprise would have removed from mathematics what was felt to be the "scandal" of the discipline, the irrational nature of the relation between the radius and the circumference of a circle, the impossibility of expressing π in arithmetically finite terms. Maybe Leonardo's researches, like Einstein's life-long quest for a "unified field theory", concerned the unification of geometry and arithmetic - which would have delivered a most powerful intellectual tool into the

hands of the scientist. Would he otherwise have noted down with so much solemnity the exact hour and place where he believed he had found the solution of this problem? The solution never worked, and so his expenditure of energy seems to us misguided, but was it really just thirst for knowledge that inspired Leonardo's superhuman efforts to penetrate the secrets of nature?

We must not forget that during the period of his intellectual formation in Florence leading philosophers placed fresh hopes on "natural magic", fed by the Hermetic corpus translated by Marsilio Ficino. The methods and means for fulfilling this aspiration must have struck the young artist as misguided, if not fraudulent. Indeed it is possible to detect in his satirical prefaces a parodistic element, mocking the portentous tone of these philosophers. What sounds mysterious can be seen to be quite natural in the light of cool reasoning. Is it not possible that Leonardo harboured the ambition to prove, through his labours, that the miracles claimed by these self-styled wonder-workers could indeed be achieved, but only through a rational penetration of the secret of nature's effects?

If this interpretation could be substantiated, it would suggest that the unity of intellect and *fantasia* in Leonardo was even greater than Kemp's Milanese chapters allow for. More often than not, however, *fantasia* was in the lead and demanded the impossible of the intellect. This is an aspect of Leonardo's personality which his contemporaries sensed very strongly, but which Kemp's biography leaves in the shade - his lack of realism, his "fantastic" leanings. It is a characteristic which is illuminated by a document mentioned by Zubov but not by Kemp, a letter (c. 1502) from Leonardo to Sultan Bajazet II, of which a Turkish translation was found in the archives in Istanbul. In it the master pledged himself to build a bridge with a single span, 1150 feet long, across the whole width of the Bosphorus. The further details of this utopian project matter less than the question of whether Leonardo himself believed in its possibility. But maybe we should not ask this question, for without this unrealistic faith in achieving the impossible Leonardo would not have been Leonardo. The Leonardo of Kemp's book is far removed from a wizard of popular belief who anticipated every invention or discovery later made by modern science and technology. He did not. But even though we must discard this anachronistic picture we should still acknowledge that he dreamt of performing miracles which only modern science finally achieved - not that by his chosen method of rational enquiry.

The ideology of rejection

By Robert Boyers

JAMES D. WILKINSON:
The Intellectual Resistance in Europe
358pp. Harvard University Press. £14.
0 674 45775 7

As a study of anti-fascist intellectuals in France, Germany and Italy during the years of the Second World War and the immediate aftermath, James Wilkinson's book does more than illuminate a period. It documents, better than any work with which I am familiar the various ways in which ideas change under the pressure of events. It shows, as well, how subject to disillusion and despair intellectuals are, most of whom achieve ideas and settle into their academic specializations, or are content to describe rather than to analyse or shape events. If anything distinguished the anti-fascist intellectuals in the period Wilkinson studies, it was their unflagging commitment to ideas and to the prospect of renovation in a culture on the brink of extinction. But precisely in the degree that they were serious about ideas and about renovation they were also subject to the varieties of retreat to which most intellectuals are inexorably compelled. If, as Wilkinson contends, the period of the Resistance was a period of hope, the larger picture reveals how rapidly hope gave way to resignation.

A major element in this study is the relation between public and private virtue. In the Resistance itself, intellectuals came to feel that they had a working model for a society of the future. There was an acceptable discipline, imposed by participants in a way that reflected their immediate needs and interests. All could agree that there was an enemy whose defeat was the primary objective, and all could feel that the ideological differences dividing them were insignificant beside the primary goal. Life in the Resistance had, in this sense, an elementary simplicity that participants valued more than many could have anticipated. One could feel ambivalent about all sorts of things, about one's children or marriage or future, without having also to consider the possibility that life itself was insignificant. Sartre recognized during his eight months of captivity in a German prison camp that "private life, if you wish, no longer existed". One belonged to something greater than oneself and mere important, than anything one was likely to accomplish by oneself. Private virtue was, in this sense, indistinguishable from public capacity to maintain a feeling of solidarity with one's comrades. The philosopher who had previously refused an "abstract notion of duty" - particularly duty conceived as a collective obligation - because this was incompatible with his idea of freedom, suddenly found himself fully engaged in a national and communitarian struggle to which he owed perfect allegiance.

In fact, as events were so soon to show, the question of the relation between public and private virtue was not settled by the Resistance experience. It had merely been put aside. Intellectuals who, in 1940, had a clear sense of their priorities, were by 1946 uncertain about the very possibility of a political commitment. Camus was not alone among French writers in discovering that the ethical principles of the Resistance were not applicable in the post-war years. When he resigned from the staff of the Resistance journal *Combat* in 1945, he had already known he would have to dirty his hands if he was to remain as intimately involved in politics as he had been. Even the question of whether or not to punish war criminals proved difficult. In the end, as Wilkinson notes, "Camus threw his weight on the side of the avengers for fear that the guilty might otherwise go free." But like Sartre and other French Resistance figures, Camus hated being forced to take positions of all too such questions, and the ambiguous behaviour of several war criminals who in adverse

seemings every bit as honourable and sincere as their accusers took a heavy toll on Camus. His principled defence of "proportion" and refusal to go along with Mauriac and others who wanted an end to hostilities of any kind could not guarantee that he would feel any more secure in the future than he did in the present. Merleau-Ponty and others on the left felt that ambiguity, properly appreciated, encouraged an appetite for risk, but Camus was for more typical in learning to value caution.

Merleau-Ponty, of course, was a central figure in French intellectual life, and seemed to understand better than his colleagues how complicated any political issue is likely to be. Unlike Sartre, he resisted from the first an idea of absolute freedom, arguing in his *Phenomenology of Perception* that "free action, in order to be discernible, has to stand out from a background of life from which it is entirely, or almost entirely, absent." We may wish to resolve problems by insisting upon what we knew to be good, but always we are forced to acknowledge constraints. Every affirmation of freedom is also in some sense a restriction of another's freedom. The rationalist who poses every dilemma as an either/or situation loses sight of the way in which freedom and complicity are invariably connected. As Merleau-Ponty describes him, he has to "establish his autonomy on the very ground of his dependence".

In *Humanism and Terror*, 1947, Merleau-Ponty presented what he took to be the political consequences of his view. A defence of the Moscow Trials, the book refuses in effect the theory of them offered by Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*. It is in every respect a sorry performance, the arguments muddled, the distinction between progressive and regressive violence entirely unsatisfactory. Wilkinson briefly explains what is weak in Merleau-Ponty's position, properly concludes that "a less rigorous standard" is applied to Marxists than to "liberal counter-part", and asks, "Why should Marxism benefit from suspended judgment when liberalism was condemned solely on the basis of present faults?" Part of the burden of *Humanism and Terror* is to argue that concepts like freedom and justice can be fully understood only by those with a revolutionary perspective. What matters is whether or not an action delivers the desired "objective results". Does it delay or further the revolution? Other questions are likely to betray collective hope, and Koestler's respect for "man in the struggle" was but one expression of a "mediocre Marxism" that would soon assume the aspect of a sterile and reactionary ideology.

Merleau-Ponty's rejection of Koestler was part of his larger critique of bourgeois violence. The critique was based upon his conviction that what was not openly admitted could not be effectually reformed. If it was the goal of bourgeois society to conceal "violence" by "appeals to Order" or to the economic laws of free enterprise, then it was the duty of progressive intellectuals to tear away the camouflage and prevent that species of violence from becoming institutionalized. Marxist societies might commit this act of violence or that, but were aiming in the long run at something better. They did not pretend that freedom in the abstract was possible in a society that depended upon the so-called free activity of the market. Freedom, properly understood, was a virtue only if responsibly used, and it could be responsibly used only by persons who had a genuine feeling for "the unity essential to the revolution". Those who judged the Moscow Trials by the standard of an abstract virtue unrelated to the ongoing struggle were naturally unable to see what was to be at stake.

Merleau-Ponty's defence of state terror in the interests of the revolutionary future was only one of many

efforts to transcend ordinariness. And like most of the other efforts, it was itself transcended or abandoned as circumstances changed and the future turned out to seem as shabby as the past had been. Wilkinson's book helps us to feel how tempting it was for gifted people even during the Nazi period to conclude from the first stirrings of distress that nothing could be done, and that political action especially would bring one to a bad end. Even in France, after all, the Resistance was the effort of very few people. And those few, once the Liberation had occurred, quickly became "more concerned with the abuse of power by emergent politicians" than its exercise.

In Germany, of course, the retreat from real political resistance occurred more or less at once, and these who wanted to resist Hitler were mostly forced to get out of the country. Wilkinson examines the content of poetry produced by Germans in POW camps, and concludes that, like most French Resistance writers, the Germans hated everything that invited ambiguity and harbored lies. They wanted to believe that the truth was simple, and felt that they might purify their souls through suffering. By enduring, they would prove they had the courage to remake the German spirit, to reform its character. Hitler would be defeated, sooner or later, and in some ways it would be better for ordinary Germans not to have other Germans to blame for his defeat. "Stab in the back" legends had an ugly way of turning people from their own responsibilities and, if anything was necessary, it was that ordinary people in Germany should be made to confront the awfulness of what they had done.

It is always difficult, of course, to understand how German intellectuals can have fallen silent, or nearly so, during the Nazi period. But Wilkinson is quite right to stress how few people in the population at large were or would have been ready to support a resistance effort. It is not only that people feared what might happen to them and their families. The fact is that most Germans were at least ambivalent supporters of the Reich, and would not have thrown their support to persons of questionable loyalty, particularly if they happened to be partisans of the left. What Wilkinson calls "the continuing German respect for qualities extolled and exploited by the Nazis - obedience, loyalty, bravery, hard work" made even the post-war responses of most Germans a good deal less morally strenuous than might have been supposed.

So Germany was not a country in which a fully formed intellectual resistance movement may be said to have taken shape. To speak, as Wilkinson and others have done, of inner emigration, of silent resistance, is to acknowledge that political action is not always a viable option, and that to resist only the worst excesses demanded by a given regime is somehow to keep oneself ready for better things when conditions improve. This is hardly a stirring "program", but it does address what may be the available perceptions of reality under conditions of absolute terror. It is hard to be impressed by the poetry of German émigrés who submitted mournfully to Hitler as if he were a force of nature, but it is also hard to know what would have been a more effective protest against that force. To die bravely, in a sense known from the start to be the only option, in which case the literary reflection and commemoration would have to have been left to a later generation.

Wilkinson's book also discusses the Italian Resistance, a subject too good to deal less fully than most Anglo-American readers than the Resistance in France or Germany. It has been clear for some time that many Italian writers supported Mussolini for a while at least, but we have heard relatively little of their Resistance efforts. Important Italian writers like Pavese and Vittorini have had only a modest number of their



Avenue des Acacias, in the Bois de Boulogne, July 1941: the traditional and experimental take to the roads in the Paris of the Occupation. This wartime scene forms one of the illustrations to *Paris Aftermath* by Henri Michel (380pp. Paris: Albin Michel, 2 216 01276 1), which will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue.

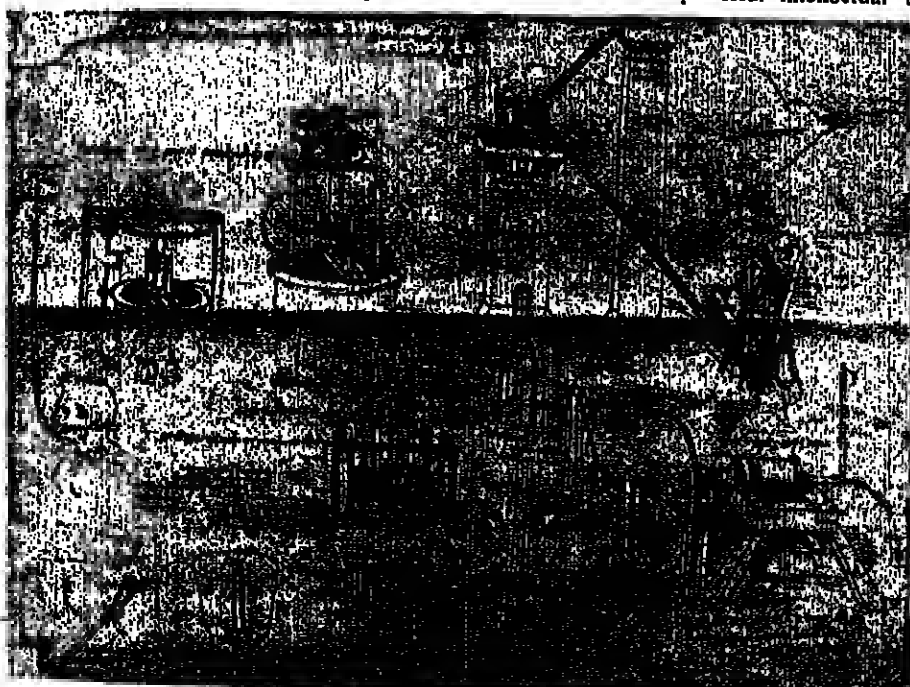
works translated into English, and these are in general not widely read or discussed. Vittorini's major anti-fascist novel, *Uomini e no*, has never been translated into English, so far as I know, and the scrupulous attention paid this book by Wilkinson will rightly make us feel how much we have been missing. Silone has, of course, been widely praised and studied, in England and America. A representative Italian Resistance figure will be badly mistaken. The sweetness and probity of Silone's mind were not qualities widely shared among his colleagues, and the inter-ethnic warfare they waged among themselves during and after the war does not provide an entirely edifying spectacle.

Vittorini emerges from Wilkinson's pages as the leading, or at least the most interesting, Italian Resistance intellectual. After briefly supporting Mussolini's attempt to clean up what both took to be the bourgeois mess, he joined with others to fight against the régime. The struggle was for the most part fought with the usual literary and journalistic tools, but there was a special struggle in the writer's persisting desire to enlist the aid of ordinary people. Vittorini's review, *Il Politecnico*, was not directed exclusively at an élite readership but tried to address social and political problems in a language available to readers of all social classes. Wilkinson rightly indicates how important Gramsci was to Italian leftists, and invokes "Gramsci's faith that every person had an intellectual vocation". But he also shows how hard it was to hold on to this faith. Not only were readers often unable to follow debate. That was a problem that might have been remedied in the long run. More troubling was the opposition of other leftist intellectuals to the very idea of debate. Vittorini's journal "nurtured debate by presenting opposing points of view within the same issue". This policy itself came under heavy attack by the Communist publication *Rinascita* and whatever unity Italian intellectuals may have achieved in their common opposition to Mussolini was quickly eroded. The hostilities followed a course comparable at least to the sectarian quarrels that split the American left in the 1930s and led to the creation of the journal *Partisan Review* in New York.

The pattern is really quite simple. A Vittorini, with the best will in the world, launches a journal dedicated both to resist fascism and to conduct a careful inquiry into present conditions. He finds, gradually, that a good part of his constituency is unhappy with him. Why? Because the inquiry he supports has no definite end in view, as Wilkinson puts it. He does not know what exactly he wants to find, has no clear sense of

what the presumably revolutionary future will look like, what shape it ought to take. More, those who are unhappy with his policies come also to attack the very idea of art and culture as these are promoted in the journal. The cultivation of aesthetic insight is deemed as counter-revolutionary, a capitulation to bourgeois affectation. After a while, Vittorini finds himself arguing that "culture must preserve itself from the 'backwardness of the masses'". What had seemed a viable democratic exercise turns out to be a belding action against the combined forces of blind political adventurism and philistinism. Brecht's facetious suggestion that intellectuals "dissolve the people and elect another" comes to seem an idea whose time has come. And, increasingly, intellectuals with some sense of a political vocation withdraw from politics to sing sad songs and concern themselves with issues more obviously tractable.

None of the key Resistance figures accurately predicted what would occur years later in the various countries affected. Who could have foreseen how Pavese's warm feeling for the United States would turn to contempt once he and other Italians had made contact with the occupying American armies? What indications were there that Konrad Adenauer's 1957 election motto, "No experiments", would help to consolidate the gains of a rebuilt German society fully capable of producing first-rate writers, artists, and thinkers? And who, finally, could have foreseen the failure of leftist intellectuals in the Western countries to build genuinely popular movements on the left? At the beginning of his book, Wilkinson recalls the sectarian debates of Jochen Benda and Karl Mannheim in the 1920s and '30s, and supports Mannheim's view of intellectuals as persons capable of maintaining "creative dissatisfaction", no matter what the temporary success of their programmes. At a time when most Western intellectuals have tired of programmes, and are more disaffected with the state of the economy than with the spiritual impoverishment of their respective nations, there remains a sense that things have not changed so much as we may wish to believe. If, as Wilkinson contends, young Resistance intellectuals forty years ago "defined their beliefs largely by what they rejected", current Western intellectuals may be said to operate quite in the same way. The only genuine "progress" we can claim is in our collective resistance to extravagantly idealist solutions. The other temptation to which many intellectuals succumbed forty years ago, namely irrationalist prophesies, remains very much a present danger. If the resistance spirit we associate with Camus, Silone, and Vittorini is good for anything, it will serve to strengthen our current resistance to that most potent temptation.



The delicately impractical, almost Heath-Robinsonish air of many of Leonardo's early designs is evident in the Archimede screw system in the top right-hand corner of the illustration, taken from the book under review. These "Devices for Rotating Water and Other Studies", executed in pen, ink and wash c. 1480, form a border to a page of the *Codex Atlanticus*, now in the Ambrosiano, Milan.

Images of vice

By Francis Haskell

DAVID CASTI:
The Calumny of Apelles
A Study in the Humanist Tradition
243pp. Yale University Press. £20.
0 300 02575 0

In the second century AD Lucian wrote an essay on Calumny in which he described an allegorical figure as depicting that vice and supposedly painted by Apelles, the most famous of all Greek masters. In fact, Lucian's own account of the circumstances in which it was produced shows that the great Apelles could not have been involved for reasons of chronology. Lucian's essay became well known in fifteenth-century Italy and was translated from the Greek into Latin and Italian. Leon Battista Alberti adapted Lucian's description of the painting by Apelles in his treatise *Della Pittura*, and suggested that as a subject it gave the artist special opportunities for displaying "invention" in a picture. Many painters - including some of the greatest, such as Botticelli, Mantegna and Raphael - did in fact produce paintings or drawings designed to treat Apelles' lost Calumny.

and David Casti's book traces the development of this and related themes in European art (and, to a lesser extent, literature) until the nineteenth century - thus taking the story much further than has been done (in published work) by previous writers on the subject.

Close examination of the surviving compositions brings to light curious and significant differences between Lucian's account of the picture and the way it was sometimes interpreted by Renaissance artists. Thus it is on occasion possible to see which version of the story or which translation was available to certain painters, and also to note how the iconography varied in different places and at different times. Dr Casti makes use of the images he has assembled to throw a good deal of light on the changing relationships of artists to rivals, critics, patrons and public. He also gives us some useful insights into Renaissance attitudes to Envy, Calumny and other vices which aroused special concern, and the allows us to follow the development, spread and eventual decline of paintings devoted to such themes.

However, not all of the author's arguments and conclusions are wholly convincing. In the first place, his discussion of the recreations made of Apelles' Calumny centres almost

entirely on its status as a moralising allegory. This sounds reasonable enough and is indeed often relevant, but unfortunately Dr Casti does not pay nearly sufficient attention to the fact (which he does of course know) that many, if not most, painters of the Renaissance and later took up the subject because they (or their patrons) wished to emulate a highly prized work of antiquity. Alberti's account of the picture was, of course, a far more accessible and influential source than Lucian's as far as painters were concerned, and Alberti shows no interest at all in its moral implications. Dr Casti's assumption that the painters who treated the subject must necessarily have been responding to concerns about envy and slander seems to me to be misleading. This I cannot see that on examination of hostile attitudes to court life and to Italian influences in late fifteenth-century France is very relevant to an understanding of the versions of the subject produced by Primaticcio and Nicolo dell'Abate - both of them Italian artists working for the French court. Casti recognizes that this "presents something of a problem" but brushes it aside too easily with the comment that "no" refers explicitly, of course, to the Italian mores or to a discussion of the courtier's "reading of that kind

had to be brought to the image by the viewer himself" - who was, incidentally, likely to have been an Italianate courtier. Casti's discussion of the "Calumny" would have gained enormously had he set it in the context of the "Marriage of Alexander and Roxana" and the many other famous paintings of antiquity which were known to Renaissance and Baroque artists from literary sources. But these are not mentioned.

A similar sort of difficulty occurs with Casti's interesting discussion of the famous version of the "Calumny" painted by Federico Zuccari. He quotes at some length from the description of the painting later given by Zuccari's son Ottaviano; and rightly points out the interesting fact that differences between his father's picture and that of Apelles. But although the omittitur Zuccari almost certainly did have the artist (indeed, himself) in mind as the man falsely accused by Envy and other evils, the fact remains that Ottaviano refers to the figure who is shown under the protection of Mercury merely as "the young man", thus giving the allegory the widest possible application. To say, as Dr Casti does, that "the figure" is clearly that of an artist is to take for granted what needs to be established,

especially in the context of Zuccari's other polemical compositions.

These are matters of interpretation. Much more irritating are the factual errors and slips. To claim that in 1436 "doubtless Alberti knew of the Medici Venus", of which the first definite record is in 1638, seems unduly self-assured, especially as it is only the type of the figure that is in question. The disputes mentioned on page 193 were not, as stated, "between the French Academy in Rome and the native school" of the Scuola di San Luca - an absurd proposition - but between the *Accademia Royale* and the *Communauté des maîtres peintres et sculpteurs* (or *Académie de Saint-Luc*) both of them in Paris. None of these mistakes is very important in itself, but when combined with an inadequate index and the very large number of misprints, they are apt to sap one's confidence. It sometimes seems as if the proof has not been corrected at all. The same name or word may be spelt in different ways on the same page at both times wrongly at that. A Cardinal Francesco Borromeo has been invented, and the mangling of names is liable to affect, with slap-dash indifference, a modern scholar, a twentieth-century painter, or an ancient historical figure. All this is regrettable in a scholarly book.

To see the person whole

By Don Locke

MARY MIDDLEY:
Heart and Mind
The Varieties of Moral Experience
176pp. Brighton: Harvester. £16.95.
0 7108 0048 7

PETER SINGER:
The Expanding Circle
Ethics and Sociobiology
190pp. Clarendon Press: Oxford University Press. £6.95.
0 19 824646 3

One essay in Mary Midgley's new collection is called "On Trying Out One's Now Sword", a title which might well have served for the whole - except, I imagine, that she would not herself describe the sword as new. Right from her opening, introductory, chapter she flails valiantly to left and to right, striking here with the side, cutting there with the edge, and sometimes impaling neatly in the print. It is a book of superb style, more entertaining than a work of philosophy has any right to be. To take two minor examples, there is G. E. Moore's pedantic prose style "like an old lawn-mower chugging over rough ground", or those reductionist who think "we ought to take to dissecting our brains instead of using them".

But all this cut and thrust, the cry and the clamour, tends sometimes to obscure the argument. A key chapter on the very notion of morality is so poorly structured that the reader has to think it all through for himself - no bad thing, perhaps - and there is an unfortunate tendency, in someone quick to criticize others for overstating their case, to exaggeration. "Every term in these contentions needs defining," she writes, "and any reasonable definition will wreck the conclusions". Every term? Any definition? Too often the author rejects some claim as meaningless, or as failing to make sense, when what she really means is that it seems to her obviously false.

Under the spell

By Desmond Lee

RUSH REEBS (Editor)
Ludwig Wittgenstein
Personal Recollections
235pp. Oxford: Blackwell £12.
0 631 19600 3

We must be grateful to Rush Reeb for this collection of memories of Wittgenstein. The number of people who knew him personally is now few, and it is valuable to get such first-hand testimony on the record while it is still possible. This collection has a particular interest because none of the contributors was professionally concerned with philosophy in their conversations with Wittgenstein; philosophical topics were not discussed, and were indeed deliberately avoided. The man is seen without any philosophic misnomer to cloud the vision.

The volume ranges from recollections by his sister Hermine, who was

But then I doubt whether Mary Midgley intends her book to be read as a work of philosophy, at least in the narrow technical sense. This is not the usual introduction to moral philosophy, but an invitation to think about the issues. Indeed it is our contemporary tendency to divide things up, to compartmentalize, to specialize - with the by-product that academic books become very boring - which she sees as the main obstacle to a proper moral understanding. At this point the metaphor of the sword becomes wholly inappropriate, for what the specialists of different persuasions - the behaviourists, the sociobiologists, the linguistic philosophers - have set asunder, Mary Midgley is concerned to put back together, to see the person whole. To this extent the book's subtitle is inappropriate too: it is concerned not so much with the varieties of moral experience, as with its interconnectedness. "It is no use trying to unscrew the outside from the inside of the teapot."

It is easy to see from Mary Midgley's book where things have gone wrong. It is much less easy to see where to go from here. It often seems that if only we could get something straight we could build towards a proper understanding of human morality, and perhaps the burgeoning human and social sciences can at last provide us with that starting point. The trouble is, though, that the contemporary orthodoxy is that matters of value, as distinct from matters of fact, are precisely what we cannot get straight, for here everyone is entitled to their own opinion, and no one can prove to the satisfaction of all that his is right and others are wrong. And this disease then infects even facts about values. The claim that values are relative to societies or individuals, for example, quickly becomes a matter of interpretation and opinion, about which individuals can legitimately differ, depending on their own value-scheme.

Nevertheless, here and in her earlier *Beast and Man*, Mary Midgley clearly belongs among those who be-

lieve that there are facts, facts of human nature, which have to be the starting-point for any adequate account of human morality. In this her interests overlap, once again, with the most prominent contemporary attempt to put ethics on a sound scientific basis, the project of sociobiology, whose claims for morality are also the topic of Peter Singer's latest book. Singer begins with a clear and crisp account of the biological basis of ethics, and especially altruism, a topic which metaphorical talk of selfish genes has done more to obscure than clarify. As Singer shows, relying mainly on the work of others, human evolution can be expected to produce creatures who are moderately altruistic, and altruistic in motivation as well as deed. Indeed what else should we expect from evolution, since that is clearly what we are?

But as Singer is well aware, to move directly from biological claims about the origins of attitudes and conduct to substantive ethical claims about the content of morality is to commit a well-known fallacy, which has not, however, prevented sociobiologists from sometimes doing precisely that. The content of ethics, according to Singer, is grounded not in biology but in reason, and in particular in a principle of equal consideration of interests. Yet this principle, whose application has been steadily extended through the course of human history - the expanding circle of Singer's title - comes into conflict with the biological bases of altruism, which instead incline us to favour first our own families, then those with whom we come into regular contact, then those of our own society or race.

This conflict, which ought to be familiar to anyone who prefers buying presents for his children to relieving the suffering of children overseas, is dramatized philosophically in William Godwin's "famous fire choice", where we are faced with a choice between saving some noted benefactor and saving our own mother who, as Godwin says, may be "a fool or a prostitute, malicious,

lying or dishonest". Of what consequence is it that she is my mother? What magic is there in the pronoun "my" to overturn the requirements of morality? But if reason and justice demand that we save the benefactor, perhaps, as Godwin came belatedly to recognize, human beings are not made like that.

It might seem that in any such conflict, biology would have to win. But, Singer argues, reason is not the slave of our passions. As Midgley also emphasizes, evolution presents us not with a rigid determinism but with a choice between, or a need to harmonize, different and often conflicting natural preferences. People are, by their biological nature, thinking and deciding beings, and they can decide to act in ways which are contrary to the evolutionary scheme. They can, for example, use contraceptives. Yet even the use of contraceptives itself demonstrates the power of our genetic inheritance. Presented with a choice between contraception and chastity, most of us will prefer the former, precisely because evolution has made us sexy. And if evolution, likewise, has made our altruism limited, whose does that leave the impartial consideration of everyone's interests?

Singer's own solution to this problem is obscure. He seems to agree both with Godwin and with his critics - in principle we ought to save the benefactor; in practice I will save my mother - and suggests that a conventional rule-based ethics may prove more practicable than the abstract appeal to the interests of all. His argument peters out with the hope that reason, combined with an increased understanding of the evolutionary pressures, may still win through.

Much depends, therefore, on Singer's argument of the rationality of his principle of the equal consideration of interests, and that, unfortunately, is the weakest part of the book. The argument is of two kinds, positive and negative. The negative argument seems to assume that the

only alternative to his principle is some form of absolutism which takes no account of the consequences of morality. The positive argument seems to assume that only an impartial or disinterested justification will satisfy a requirement of being acceptable to everyone. Both assumptions seem clearly false.

To non-philosophers, moreover, Singer's argument will seem a prime instance of the philosophers' fallacy of assuming - despite a delightful caustic quotation from Oscar Wilde that we are more rational than we actually are. No doubt wholly rational beings will agree on something, only if it can be shown to be equal in the interests of all, but human beings, down the centuries, have been persuaded to accept all manner of arrangements which are decidedly neither impartial nor disinterested.

Like the sociobiologists, who despite their name are manifestly more interested in biology than they are in society, Singer tends to underestimate social needs and pressures. Societies need to survive, no less than the human species, if only because the human species needs societies to survive in, and those factors which contribute to the survival of the society - co-operation, conformity, obedience - may not be the ones which evolution has bested into the individual. It is therefore possible, as the psychologist Donald Campbell has suggested, that societies evolve moralities as a counterweight to our genetic individualism, and that the greater the genetic pull towards individualism the more demanding the social morality has to be. This failure to consider Campbell's position is the most striking omission in Singer's impressive synthesis.

Singer's virtues are in many ways the opposite of Midgley's. Where he is provoking, he is thoughtful; his literary style consists solely of the exceptional clarity of his prose. But both are books which deserve to be as they are obviously intended to be read twenty years before. Long and Trilling remarked, in an essay on David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, that the contemporary novelist was no longer preoccupied with actuality, that he had lost "the sensitivity to things and the curiosity about them" which were "essential to the very idea of the novel", and this indispensable curiosity had now been pre-empted by the sociologists. Some- what later, Mary McCarthy made the same point in her famous essay "The Fact in Fiction", in which she argued that "the distinctive mark of the novel is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable". Unlike Wolfe, however, Trilling and McCarthy sought not to replace serious novelists, but to recall them to their task.

John Hellmann, in this study of the new journalism, had a different heat in view, and seeks to prove that the reportage of Norman Mailer, Hunter Thompson, Tom Wolfe, and Michael Herr, far from dethroning the myth-mongering novelists, belongs alongside them in the imaginative pantheon of "fabulist fiction". This is a startling idea - or would be, if Hellmann had made a genuine effort to prove his thesis against Wolfe's contradictory claims for the superiority of reportorial realism over the surreal fictions of Yonnegut, Barth, Pynchon, Coover, and the like. Hellmann asserts, but does not demonstrate, that such books as Michael Herr's *Dispatches*, about the Vietnam war, or Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, about the Presidential race, are part of the high literary art of our time because they combine the credibility of reporting "with the self-reflexive pattern-making of fabulist fiction".

Hellmann relies on words like "pattern" and "fabulist", as well as on other overworked favourites in the lofty-academic-vagueness repertoire: (meta)fiction, "authorial consciousness", "ontological unreality", etc., but does not define them with the precision such generalities demand. The words seem to have a mystically self-confirming power for Hellmann, but his pretentious terminology is often ludicrously inappropriate to his subject. To on-look Thompson's scatological hysteria and messy self-indulgence with "ontological status" presumably abhors the critic from any further effort at making proper critical judgments.

Hellmann is indifferent to such matters, but even if he were lost of a complaisant academic critic, his attempt to make "fabulist" bricks from new-journalist straw would be doomed by the nature of his subject. Despite Tom Wolfe's pronouncement, the new journalism has proved no more capable of destroying the novel than of sustaining the frantically bright style devised to grip the easily distracted readers of *Esquire*, the *Herald-Tribune's* Sunday magazine, the *Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*. Even in its heyday during the 1960s, when the *Herald-Tribune* hoped to stave off its demise with Tom Wolfe's try-anything-does-it, the new journalism was new only by virtue of its excess, and it was certainly not journalism in any useful sense of the word. The free-swinging antics of Wolfe and his disciples in the 1960s, of recounting "real life" as though he was making it up (as indeed he was some of the time). While this could be amusing, the fashionable taste for zany trivia proved to be short-lived, and the term "new journalism" came to be casually affixed to any reportage that has outgrown the ratchet spontaneity

JOHN HELLMANN:
Fables of Fact
The New Journalism as Now Fiction
164pp. University of Illinois Press.
£7.40.
522 00847 2

It is now almost a decade since Tom Wolfe, then the Grand Cham of the so-called new journalism, gloomily predicted that his kind of reportage would soon "wipe out the novel as literature's main event". What he called "the damnable novel", which had lured generations of would-be serious writers in the wrong direction, was as good as dead and had been displaced in the literary firmament by Wolfe, Jimmy Breslin, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer, et al, though they still refused to acknowledge that this had happened. The pioneers of the new journalism placed themselves at centre-stage in their accounts of everything from hot-hot racism to the latest New York fashions in manners, clothes, and morals. Since novelists, in Wolfe's view, had become increasingly occupied with myth and fantasy, social realism had been left to the journalists, who now conceived their work and methods in radically new ways. These bright and self-assured new voices, according to Wolfe, would no longer be hobbled by out-moded conventions of objectivity and impersonal detachment, by the gentility of understatement; not for them the dull drone of a self-offering prose devoid of "personality, energy, drive, bravura... style, in a word. Up with flamboyant realism, down with the obscurity of the 'neo-fabulists' who had run the novel into the ground."

Tom Wolfe's complaint about the modern novel was hardly new. Some twenty years before, Lionel Trilling had remarked, in an essay on David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd*, that the contemporary novelist was no longer preoccupied with actuality, that he had lost "the sensitivity to things and the curiosity about them" which were "essential to the very idea of the novel", and this indispensable curiosity had now been pre-empted by the sociologists. Somewhat later, Mary McCarthy made the same point in her famous essay "The Fact in Fiction", in which she argued that "the distinctive mark of the novel is its concern with the actual world, the world of fact, of the verifiable". Unlike Wolfe, however, Trilling and McCarthy sought not to replace serious novelists, but to recall them to their task.

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Who's afraid of Tom Wolfe?

By Pearl K. Bell

Hellmann is indifferent to such matters, but even if he were lost of a complaisant academic critic, his attempt to make "fabulist" bricks from new-journalist straw would be doomed by the nature of his subject. Despite Tom Wolfe's pronouncement, the new journalism has proved no more capable of destroying the novel than of sustaining the frantically bright style devised to grip the easily distracted readers of *Esquire*, the *Herald-Tribune's* Sunday magazine, the *Village Voice*, and *Rolling Stone*. Even in its heyday during the 1960s, when the *Herald-Tribune* hoped to stave off its demise with Tom Wolfe's try-anything-does-it, the new journalism was new only by virtue of its excess, and it was certainly not journalism in any useful sense of the word. The free-swinging antics of Wolfe and his disciples in the 1960s, of recounting "real life" as though he was making it up (as indeed he was some of the time). While this could be amusing, the fashionable taste for zany trivia proved to be short-lived, and the term "new journalism" came to be casually affixed to any reportage that has outgrown the ratchet spontaneity

Hellmann is unable or unwilling to acknowledge that the "consciousness" which presumably converts new journalism into art is in some main conscious only of the journalist himself. This short-sightedness stems largely from Hellmann's uncritical ascent to the clichés of the 1960s about American society and culture which pervaded the self-centred journalism of Mailer and Thompson a decade ago. (Tom Wolfe's instinctive distaste for every form of solemnity led him to mock the pieties of guilt-stricken white liberals as caustically as he skewered the pretensions of café society, and in the process brought the indispensable term "radical chic" into the language. Unfortunately his malicious frivolity was not always so salutary.) In Hellmann's posited sociology of culture, lifted without the faintest scepticism from Mailer and Thompson, contemporary America is destructive, "unreal", and corrupt simply because these journalists say that it is all these things - and worse.

It seems not to have occurred to Hellmann that Hunter Thompson's drag-added revelations about Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern were often more halcyon than fact, or that Tom Wolfe's anti-intellectualism seriously distorted his expositions of art, culture, and the New Yorker. Because he has left no critical distance between his judgments and the new journalists' assumptions about society and themselves, Hellmann ignores crucial questions raised by the books he seeks to analyse. In particular Mailer's *The Executioner's Song* and Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. Why, for instance, did Mailer leave himself out of the book to such an uncharacteristic extent? One would never guess from Hellmann's discussion that the circumstances that led Mailer to write a "true-life novel" about Gary Gilmore did him no more credit than they did the rest of the media predators who exploited the story for all it was worth. That Mailer's virtual absence from the story, along with his reliance on materials gathered by other reporters, would seem to disqualify *The Executioner's Song* as new journalism is never considered, much though Hellmann specifies personal involvement as vital to the genre.

Neither does he take into account, in his discussion of *Dispatches*, the way Herr's frenetic prose, soaked in the drug and rock argot of the counter-culture, attempts to project all this as yet another aspect of the war. It is surely as significant as all the prattle about "authorial consciousness" that Michael Herr, for all his brilliant insights into the way the war had affected American life, could not recognize the hypocrisy of "revolutionary" rock stars like Mick Jagger, braying "Street Fighting Man" while the dollars poured in.

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When Harry Angstrom is first introduced to us, aged twenty-six, in *Rabbit, Run*, his achievement is already a thing of the past, and he is at the point where his stifferly limited present has become unendurable. The high-school basketball champion who was breaking county records back in the early 1950s now works as a demonstrator of the MagiPeel Kitchen Peelor. He has a three-year-old son, Nelson, and a disorganized and very pregnant wife, Janice, who has recently discovered a taste for whiskey. All that Harry has left of his heady days is his basketball nickname, Rabbit. He can still run, however, and early in the novel attempts flight from Mount Judge, the suburb of Brewer where he has lived all his life, to his Gulf of Mexico. Through a childish panic he finds himself taking the wrong direction and driving back towards Pennsylvania; it is then that he runs for reassurance to his old coach Tolliver. Tolliver obliges his star pupil with some glowingly vague reminiscences; he also lends Rabbit to Ruth, and a brief love affair which leaves her pregnant, thanks to Rabbit's fastidious aversion to female contraceptive devices.

Ten years later, in *Rabbit Redux*, the tables are turned: Janice deserts Rabbit for the suave Greek, Charlie Stavros, an employee of Springer Motors, her father's company. Permissiveness invades the shaky Angstrom household as Rabbit gives shelter to two radicals, Skeeter and Jill. In both novels, the wages of sexual liberty are death. In *Rabbit, Run* the deserted Janice, in an alcoholic daze, drowns their new baby daughter while trying to bath her; while *Rabbit Redux* has Jill burned alive in a fire started by vengeful neighbours.

In John Updike's new novel *Rabbit is Rich*, Rabbit, another decade on, is almost a star again. His father-in-law has bequeathed him co-ownership, with Janice and her ever-present mother, of Springer Motors. America is running out of gas, but Rabbit is confident that nothing on the road can beat his Toyota for mileage. With his yellowing press-cuttings and basketball trophies ranged around the walls of his office, he feels the textures of success as intensely as he once felt the glitter of failure.

swinging in his clean suit in and out of Service and Parts where the men work filmed with oil and look up: white-eyed from the bulb-lit engines as in a kind of underworld... the star and apocryphal of all these two dozen employees and hundreds of thousands of feet of working space which seem a wide shadow behind him as he stands there up front.

Reverberations of the horrors in Rabbit's past are well-dubbed by this lining of dollar-rich fat. If the lives of Rabbit and Janice have been transformed it is not by their shared experiences of tragedy, but by money. This may be seen as evidence of the kind of psychic limitations a consumer society imposes, allowing its members the opportunity only for material growth, but it is not an inference Updike makes himself.

Rabbit, then, is only fleetingly haunted by a sense of guilt. As he views the headless rich' harvest of the dead (now including Tolliver and Skeeter) he feels 'happy' for the first time since childhood, simply to be alive, even the contemplation of the oil shortages, showing him that the earth is mortal too; enhances his own sense of wealth. He is aware of, but untroubled by, the fact that mentally he 'dodges among more blanks than there used to be; patches of burnt out grey cells where there used to be brains and keen dreaming and wondering about life'. His relationship with Stavros, now one of his employees, is thoroughly amiable.

Thinking of that ten-year-old penetration of Janice he feels "hostile and cozy in almost equal proportions". Until, cozening getting the edge". Ultimately, it is difficult to make exciting fiction out of the compromises - or the deceptions - of maturity. List, keen dreaming and wide-eyed dread were the very qualities which made the two earlier novels as engaging as this one, over all, is not.

In both the previous books Updike views his anti-hero with the minimum of irony. Though alive to the clash between what actually happens and the glimpsed ideal, he invariably allows the ideal to shed an impassioned light on the actual, whether the latter takes the form of a woman's body or a geographical place. His technique is similar in the new volume, though now the idealism burns less brightly. The title perhaps suggests a gentle mockery, since Rabbit is no Rockefeller; he is rich only by his own small-town standards. But, just as the author is not out to draw morals, so he refuses to exploit the great satirical potential of Rabbit's menopause, and continues to view the world through his protagonist's essentially innocent and humourless eyes. The humour that emerges does so casually, simply as part of Updike's *verité* technique.

Rabbit/Updike possesses in abundance the poet's "negative capability". The whole-hearted response to scenes and people pours out in pages of fluent description, in which rhapsodic breathlessness is usually tempered by clarity of observation. Few other writers have a more thrilling sense of the tacky, cluttered beauty of urban surfaces. In *Rabbit, Run* Brewer is "a red city, where they paint wood, tin, even red brick red, an orange rose flowerpot red that is unlike the colour of any other city in the world...". In the new book, something of the excited manner remains, but the view is both more sharply realistic and cruder in feeling. Brewer, now is

the flowerpot-coloured city that German workers built on a grid laid out by an English surveyor and where now the Polacks and spics and blacks sit crammed in listening to each other's television sets through the walls, and each other's babies cry, and each other's Saturday nights turn ugly.

There is nothing in the new novel to compare with the extraordinarily vivid and tender love scene between Ruth and Rabbit in the first book, where the minutiae of the domestic and emotional ritual are recorded precisely, excitedly, but without salaciousness. Here, all but one of Rabbit's sexual encounters are with his wife, though he is still very much alive to the attractions of other women. At the start he is ambivalent towards Janice - "Somewhere early in the Carter administration his interest, that had been pretty faithful, began to wobble, and by now there is a real crisis of confidence". But now Rabbit is rich enough to solve his financial and sexual problems at a stroke. Troubled by the thought of devaluation, he purchases thirty Kruggerands and, in what amounts to a slightly coarse-grained parody of an Updikean love scene, comic but like "goda bedded among stars", turned on by the profligate scattering of their newly acquired gold coins over the bed.

As a more amnive spur to action, Rabbit is certainly an unsuitable case for an odyssey. He lacks the complicated mental equipment of a Hemingway or even a Zuckerman; he is little philosophy or politics and so on. In the earlier volumes this did seem to matter. His talent was perhaps simply for being young. At twenty-six he announced "If you have the guts to be yourself, other people'll pay your price". That optimism had at least a quality of true desperation, giving the narrative propulsion and tightness this novel lacks. When we leave him, Rabbit is marbled his first grandchild, a little moist-eyed. If not yet quite pious, he is obviously determined to go gentle into that good night. Rabbit doesn't run any more; he goes jogging.

Updike faces Rabbit at the beginning of the novel with the casual appearance in his show-room of a girl who resembles Ruth. Rabbit is both sexually excited by her and convinced that she is his daughter. His attempt to discover her real identity and to track down Ruth herself is somewhat intermittent and lacklustre, however, and ends in a polite stalemate as he accepts Ruth's insistence that the child cannot be his. Then there is the confrontation between Rabbit and Nelson, an aggressive ritual while, despite the Angstroms' fear that their son has been traumatized by events in his early life, centres on entirely traditional areas of contention - a pregnant girl-friend, the desire to "drop out" of college, and ill-treatment of the father's cars.

If we are intended to draw a parallel between Nelson's behaviour and that of Rabbit in his youth, it is not a particularly illuminating one. Viewed through Rabbit's world-weary gaze, Nelson's wriggings in the closing part of adulthood seem banal: the young Rabbit was Werther-like by comparison. With his political cynicism and whining sense of having been cheated by his elders, he seems a typical rather than unique product of his generation. "It's a dullsville", he complains, in surely dated hipster slang, of his Alma Mater, Kent State. "People think because that shooting ten years ago it's some great radical place, but the facts show the kids are Ohio local boys who idea of a terrible dmo is drinking beer till they throw up and having shaving-cream fights in the dorm. Most are going into their father's business any way, they don't care." The irony of this is that Nelson himself urgently wants a job at Springer Motors. Rabbit only retorts

of description, as if catching the exact textures of everyday life as well as Rabbit's thoughts and feelings could make up for the absence of real conflict. His conversations often read like insufficiently edited tape, as if a tape-recorder had been surreptitiously set at the poolside of the family dinner table. It could almost be the kind of book a literary writer would produce if forced by penury to "novelize" a few episodes from some neatly-observed television family saga. Updike, by being true to the extreme ordinariness of his character and the commonness of his society, has turned himself into a bland reflection of both.

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coincidence than on his own enterprise) but as the novel reaches its climax, life turns bafflingly perverse. Nothing is as it appears to be, nothing has been as it seemed; life and the future won't be imposed upon, and the novel ends with Lundgren's acquiescence in his own bewilderment.

Warlock carries an epigraph from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lines in which Bottom speaks of being "a most rare vision... a dream past the will of man to say what dream it was." Like Bottom's, Lundgren's dream is misleading and only partly understood; misleading because the boundaries between dream and reality are blurred. Both Bottom and Lundgren become actors in a fatal tragedy of love which, by their own incompetence, they reduce to farce; both are fools with access to an instinctive wisdom denied to the wiser folk around them.

In wishing to change his future, Lundgren aspires to change the world. We are told that "on a mostly subconscious level he was vitally concerned with the world conforming to his idea of it." This ambition allies him to another, potentially literary archetype, the Knight of La Mancha (Lundgren characteristically prefers his story in the Broadway musical form his wife finds disgusting) who

TONY HARRISON:

Continuous
30 Sonnets from *The School of Eloquence*
64pp. Rex Collings. £3.95.
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Continuous continues, and contains, a sequence of poems by Tony Harrison that first appeared in book form some three years ago, when Rex Collings brought out a volume under the title *"The School of Eloquence"* and other poems. There were eighteen *School of Eloquence* pieces in that book. Nearly twice as many have been added to make up the fifty that constitute this one.

These poems, which their author, following Meredith's example, has decided to call "sonnets", are of sixteen rhyming pentameter lines each. There is, however, a certain amount of give and take where metre is concerned. Many lines are rhythmically uneven. Some stop abruptly at the fourth iamb, while others have extra syllables thrust upon them. Harrison's sense of opportunity and exactness of ear and mind in these arrangements, but I should also say that a strong leaning towards prosodic misbehaviour - a tactical wish to make things rougher for the reader than they need really be - operates as well.

We are given to understand that *The School of Eloquence* is a work in progress. It would be interesting to know if its author has a final shape in mind. My own suspicion is that the sequence is potentially endless and that it will continue to grow, rather like Berryman's *Dream Songs*, in an ad hoc and catch-all fashion. Nonetheless, *Continuous* is divided into three sections that give it the semblance of form: the first dealing with language, culture and history; the second with Harrison's relationship to his working-class parents, both now dead; and the third with more casually related themes.

There are, however, many pieces that would fit as happily into one section as into another, which I take to be a measure of the intrinsic unity of this book. In lieu of an ultimate design, a sense of inner necessity prevails - a spirit of opportunism and legerdemain, whereby trifles and lucky finds are shown by the poet to carry greater significance than was his contending readers, could ever have predicted.

Harrison is a latter-day Metaphysical, but one who expeditiously renounces metaphysics of the religious sort. An outstandingly powerful poem called "Marked with D," conceals the cremation of the poet's father, who in life worked as a baker's man (shades of the nursery rhyme), leaves this quite clear:

When the chilled dough of his flesh went
in an oven
not unlike those he fuelled all his life;
I thought of his cataracts ablaze with
Heaven
and radiant with the light of his dead
wife,
light streaming from his mouth in shapes
"dot Florence and not Ho but always
Florida".
I thought how his cold tongue burst into
game
but only literally, which makes me
sorry for his sake there's no Heaven to
reach.
I get it all from earth my daily bread
but he hungered for release from mortal
that kept him down, the tongue that
weighed like lead.

The baker's man that no-one will see
and England made to feel like some dull
out
is spoke, enough to sting one person's
eyes
and ash (not willow flour) for one small
load.

Articulating the awkwardness

By Christopher Reid

and stout upholders of our law and
one day thought its depth worth wugging on
and borrowed a convict hush-hush from
his warden
and winched him down; and back, flayed,
grey, mad, dumb.

Not even a good flinging made him
holter!

The phrase "hush-hush" has a particular eloquence in this context, and is typical of Harrison's urbane guerrilla tactics, whereby a witty device, disguised as something throwaway, almost negligible, is left to explode at the least expected moment.

Harrison is a cunning operator. He knows, not only all the tricks in the book, but how to invest their use with a potent ironic force as well. Thus, in describing Uncle Joe's stammer - the simile itself is thrilling - as "like a d-d-damascener's hammer", he ends a mere speech-defect with all the grace of that sought-after poetic figure, alliteration. Or, else, in

"Bringing Up" concerns his mother's horror at her son's first published volume, *The Lovers*, and concludes with her judgment: "You weren't brought up to write such mucky books!" Another piece, "Book Ends II", dwells on his failure to write an appropriate epitaph for his mother, and reports his father's scathing response: "You're supposed to be the bright boy at school / and you can't tell them what the fuck to pull!" Clearly, with domestic testimonials like these, it would be hard for any poet to maintain huge confidence in the primacy of his art.

Yet Harrison continues to write, and it would be worthwhile to ask his reasons for doing so. On the evidence presented here, I should say that his poems constituted manoeuvres in a kind of class warfare, in which deliberate awkwardness plays a crucial part. Harrison's technique is to work in dangerous enemy territory, behind the bourgeois lines, taking pot-shots in that most cultivated, and hence vulnerable, of middle-class preserves - poetry.

"Articulation is the tongue-tied fighting", we read in "On Not Being Milton", the first poem in *Continuous* and the one that comes closest to offering a declaration of intent. A number of these sonnets have been written to redeem, for whom repression has taken an oral or verbal form: Harrison's Uncle Joe, a stammerer, and Uncle Harry, who was dumb; the speakers of non-standard languages and dialects; the Luddites, whose words are doomed to be "silence, parties and hush on whistling hills"; and, most movingly, the nameless victim of the fate that is described with such anger in "National Trust":

Bottomless pits. There's one at
Castleton,
Singers' hell for leather all day long
some sort of sweatshop bit the looks on
it
running up them dresses... them
sarong!

Next door but one this side's from room
Singers' hell for leather all day long
some sort of sweatshop bit the looks on
it
running up them dresses... them
sarong!

Bottomless pits. There's one at
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Castleton,
Singers' hell for leather all day long
some sort of sweatshop bit the looks on
it
running up them dresses... them
sarong!

Here the wrong word, the malapropism, becomes the rhyme-word, and therefore the right one. It is as if this were Harrison's method of vitiating his father before a reading public that must perforce consist largely of class enemies.

Doing things as well as, if not better than, the bourgeois practitioners gives Harrison the licence to do them more clumsily too. There are some lines in *Continuous* that remain obstinately hard to enunciate, and others where the syntax twists like a maze intended to lose readers, rather than help them on their way to understanding. Metaphors are frequently mixed - sometimes to comic advantage, as when Harrison laments the loss of "the tongue that I once used to know / but can't bone up on now, and that's m m m m" - but occasionally with disastrous results. The poem "Fire Eater" opens with a persuasive simile -

My father speaking was like conjurers I'd
seen
pulling bright silk hankies, scarves, a
flag
up out of their innards, red, blue,
so many colours it would make me
sag -

but the attempt to unite this with a metaphor involving fire-eating is hopelessly garbled: "I'm the clown sent in to clear the ring / Their [his father's and uncle's] are the tones of fire I'm forced to swallow / then bring back knotted, one continuous string / Igniting pant-up silences

Harrison's stance is ambivalent, to say the least. He can, and often does, write like a virtuoso, and yet awkwardness abounds on almost every page. A well-sustained metaphor may be followed, as in the case above, by a botched one, as if the poet were telling us, with didactic emphasis, "You can't hope for treats all the time."

The clue to Harrison's ornery attitude is to be found in a poem entitled "Turns", which describes the death of his father:

Dad was sprawled beside the postbox
(will VR)
his cap turned inside up, beside his
snuggled in a H in purple Indian ink
and Brylcreem slicks displayed no folk
he wanted charity for dropping dead.
So far, so effective - but the poem concludes:

He never begged. For now! Death's
reluctance
crouns his life's, and me, I'm opening my
tousk the class that broke him for the
peace.
that splash like brackish tears into our
exp.

Harrison is fond of recalling George Formby, but these last lines bring to mind a comic who works in a field closer to sentimentality and embarrassment - Norman Wisdom, in their

looking out for.

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tenor not a little too mawkish? I think so, but I dare say, too, that the effect is intentional. A poet who refuses to heed bourgeois precepts where metrical regularity, the use of impolite words and rhetorical assaults on his readership are concerned would, after all, be unlikely to give much thought to the question of "good taste" - except in so far as it offered yet another weak spot through which to offend cultured sensibility. The heart on Harrison's sleeve is worn - no bones about it - to disconcert.

The best poems in *Continuous* are those that demand our immediate heartfelt response, and they are to be found mostly in the second section, where intimate family matters are at issue. Whereas one sees the good sense of those pieces which deplore the suppression of people who could not speak for themselves, one feels the rightness of the one that begins: "Though my mother was already two years dead / Dad kept her slippers warming by the gas", or of the two or three that mourn the dissolution of a happy household after the deaths of both parents.

Harrison's mode of awkwardness is perfectly suited to describing the unease within a family where he was set apart by his bookishness and superior education. The rare moments of communal comeliness across the more poignant, whether the poet is describing a session in an air-raid shelter whose trappings ("Air Raid Precautions out of Kensal/A Victory jig-saw on Fry's Cocoa tray") are studiously rescued from oblivion, or a holiday in Blackpool, where the family is to be found gripping the pier machine that gave you shocks.

The current would connect. We'd feel the buzz
ravel the loosening ties to one tense gig
the family circle, one continuous US!

The rhyming of "buzz" and "US" is, of course, another calculated affront.

Continuous is a splendidly rich book, full of wit, tenderness, honesty, intelligence and anger. It would be impossible to predict how *The School of Eloquence* will be completed, if indeed it can be, but I hope to enjoy a good many more poems in this line from the creator of the present sequence. Meanwhile Bloodaxe Books has brought out a pair of handsome pamphlets to show that Harrison has been engaged on other work besides his major obsession. *U.S. Marital* consists of eighteen squibs, translated into zealously scurrilous American English from the Latin of the great epigrammatist. *A Kumquat for John Keats* is a comely verse meditation on the bitter-sweetness of life, for which the oxymoronic fruit provides a suitable metaphor. Both are slight productions by comparison with the Marcellian sonnets, but they are worth looking out for.

Fantastist in the shopping-mall

By T. O. Treadwell

JIM HARRISON:

Warlock
262pp. Collins. £6.95.
000226251

Warlock is a comic novel which rests on the premise that beneath the alien and sophisticated surfaces of America lie the old nature gods still exercising their capricious power. This fauna-in-the-shopping-mall territory has been explored before, by writers as various as John Cheever, Peter De Vries and John Irving, but the landscape is a rich one, and to it Jim Harrison has brought a fresh and original eye.

Johnny Lundgren, the novel's central character, is forty-two and lives in rural Northern Michigan with Dr. Lundgren, his glamorous second wife. He has worked as an executive for a family foundation but the revenue authorities have come to view these institutions as elaborate tax-avoidance schemes, and Lundgren has been unemployed for a year, living on his wife's earnings as a nurse. Lundgren leads an elaborate fantasy life centred on his private deity as "Warlock", a secret name

given him in boyhood during a cub initiation ceremony. As the novel opens, he is emerging from a powerful and mysterious dream at the climax of which a voice from the earth has commanded him to change his future. He finds the idea a compelling one, but in spite of the magical and diabolical associations of his secret name, Lundgren-Warlock does not find it easy to take charge of his own destiny.

It is his wife, more intelligent and energetic than himself, who at length finds him a job with the sinister Dr. Rabun, a millionaire inventor whose masterpiece is "an absurdly effective prosthetic device for men made impotent by severe diabetes and other biological rather than imaginary causes", and whose weird balloon-like shoes may well hide cloven feet. Lundgren is to act as a sort of private detective, defending the far-flung outposts of Dr. Rabun's financial empire from the depredations of swindlers and bloodsuckers, chief among whom are the doctor's hostile wife and homosexual son.

As a job for a fantastist this could hardly be bettered, and Lundgren sets out on the trail - the lone wanderer, master of his fate and captain of his soul. For a time, he is successful (though his successes depend more on chance encounters and

coincidence than on his own enterprise) but as the novel reaches its climax, life turns bafflingly perverse. Nothing is as it appears to be, nothing has been as it seemed; life and the future won't be imposed upon, and the novel ends with Lundgren's acquiescence in his own bewilderment.

Warlock carries an epigraph from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the lines in which Bottom speaks of being "a most rare vision... a dream past the will of man to say what dream it was." Like Bottom's, Lundgren's dream is misleading and only partly understood; misleading because the boundaries between dream and reality are blurred. Both Bottom and Lundgren become actors in a fatal tragedy of love which, by their own incompetence, they reduce to farce; both are fools with access to an instinctive wisdom denied to the wiser folk around them.

In wishing to change his future, Lundgren aspires to change the world. We are told that "on a mostly subconscious level he was vitally concerned with the world conforming to his idea of it." This ambition allies him to another, potentially literary archetype, the Knight of La Mancha (Lundgren characteristically prefers his story in the Broadway musical form his wife finds disgusting) who

travels over the landscape in a doomed attempt to impose a set of crazy but noble ideals on recalcitrant everyday reality. Lundgren's dreams are less than chivalric, but they are generous and humane. There is nothing evil about Lundgren, and "Warlock" is at this level an inappropriate way for him to think of himself. But Harrison is a self-conscious writer, and knows that "warlock" derives from the Old English *weolca* which means, literally, "star against the truth", and thus gets at Lundgren's refusal (like Bottom's and Don Quixote's) to see his relationship with the rest of the world as an objective light. Out of this refusal comes comedy, but something deeper too.

Warlock is an ambitious novel, and it must be said that the plot is a bit too slight for the thematic weight it is expected to bear. What satisfies most, perhaps, is the author's vigorous and often acerbic wit. This comment on changing fashions in adolescent reading-matter is a representative example. "After all, the most obnoxious young people are those who read Thomas Wolfe and take that great burly oak to heart. In the following generation Khalil Gibran and Hermann Hesse were to cause fewer problems, albeit their brand of pag seemed to cause early senescence among the young." Exactly so.

Fewston, Full Fathom Five

Once they drowned a whole village
To make a reservoir, drinking water for Leeds
That was itself overflowing... I imagined
The villagers of course (the real ones
Had been rehoused) swimming the streets
With torches, like cautious fish so deep
It was always dark, but they still kept
Regular hours, emerging each morning
To buy food, newspapers, and again at night
To walk their dogs. In dry summers
You could see the tip of the church spire,
Where seagulls perched - otherwise a lake.
Like any lake, indifferent to every claim
Except weather. And on warm nights
Lovers would drive from Leeds to watch
How its surface thudded to the moon, even
To the headlights of cars on the opposite shore
That danced towards them, as in the songs.

Charles Boyle

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All you need is love

By Lesley Cunliffe

CHARLES HAMM:
Yesterday
Popular Music in America
560pp. W. W. Norton. £14.50.
0 093 01257 3

Imagine the pleasure of the Indexer of a book in the history of American Popular song as he sets in work on the "I's" - and realizes he is going to surpass Whitman at comic Meism. There is the delicious crisis of identity: "I Am - A Lonesome Hobo; A Rock; A Rose; A union Wman". Or, "I'm - A Respectable Working Girl; About To Be A Mother; An Indian; An Old Cow Hand". Fascinating symptoms: "I'm Afraid To Come Home In The Dark; Always Chasing Rainbows; Beginning To See The Light; Biting My Fingernails And Thinking Of You; Oh I'm Not Young Anymore". Good solutions: "I'm Going South; Back To Old Nebraska; See My Mother; I'm Gonna - Charleston Back To Charleston; Laugh You Out Of My Life; Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter; Wosh That Man Right Out Of My Hair". Hopes and aspirations: "I Wanna - Get Married; Spend Christmas With Elvis; I Want - A Girl Just Like The Girl That Married Dear Old Dad; Someone To Go Wild With Me; To Be Bad; To Hold Your Hand; To Lenn To Jazz Dance". And perhaps to sum up: "I Want What I Want When I Want It".

This list did not come from Charles Hamm's book - his Indexer was not given such scope for poetry with the section beginning "I's". This is consistent with the rest of the book, in which there is a hint of the author's own measured enthusiasm, upon which dust has since settled. To brush off the dust reveals the joins. He seems to have pasted a conscientious doctoral thesis on early American sheet music on to a lasty piece about Tin Pan Alley and tucked on a routine explanation of the 1960s.

Such is the author's diffidence that he hardly ever ventures an opinion of his own, seldom speculating, for instance, on the reasons for a song's failure. He is content to cite inclusion in an anthology as proof of popularity. In a disclaimer of an introduction, the author defines popular music as that which "is composed and marketed with the goal of financial gain... disseminated in physical form after first being performed in some secular stage entertainment, and afterwards consumed (performed or listened to) in the home by persons of limited musical training and ability". So "Happy Birthday To You", the most frequently sung song in the English language is excluded, since Patty and Mildred J. Hill, the kindergarten teachers who wrote it in 1893, did not intend it for the market. Nor does "Humm", consider hundreds of other important songs, such as "Home On The Range". Yes, Sir, That's My Baby, "California Here I Come", "How Ya Gonna Keep 'Em Down On The Farm After They've Seen Parole", "I Wish I Could Shimmy Like My Sister Kate", "Charleston", "Ten Cents A Dance" - only a few of the serious omissions which reveal the author's self-defeating conservatism about the germ of a good popular song. He seems unable to do with the cheap catchy tune on its own terms.

Popular songs in America were very nearly journalistic in reflecting national preoccupations. Music publishers, often composers themselves, have been quick off the mark to detect change in the popular taste, to adapt, to innovate, of more "serious" composers, and to fill a need or create one. The songwriter, impelled by the profit motive, wrote the lowest common denominator. But he comes up with a "hit" when he writes that "despite the fact in the blues, the songwriting is a kind of genius. The extraordinary

potency of cheap music cumbines a catchy tune with the appeal of novelty, the comforting qualities of the banal and universal, and the utility of the cliché.

Some songs function as unifying anthems. During the two World Wars the singing in the Grand Struggle. This was even more true of the American Civil War, when sheet music or songs like "Weeping, Sad And Lonely" and "When This Cruel War Is Over" sold a million copies in both North and South. The tunes for such songs were of the flimsiest musical structure, certainly falling into the category of "formula music", which has always been with us. Mr Hamm misses the point when he fails to recognize popular songs as artefacts embodying the times in which they were written: "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To" crooned millions of GIs to their girls - their children courted to "Let's Spend The Night Together".

The funny thing about popular songs is that they can be so personal. A list of the Hit Parade from one's own lifetime is like a family album. Some of the songs are simply pretty pictures; some, which seem to have the same ordinary attractiveness to the outsider as for oneself a reminder of triumph, heartbreak or unutterable affection. There are others which baffle: Who was that girl? What odd clothes. Could I or we have ever looked like that? We did. But there are always those which summon up a time when all was bright with the world, God was in His Heaven and had all his hair and there was no shortage of dancing partners.

Songs of the griot country

By Tony Russell

SAMUEL CHARTERS:
The Roots of the Blues
An African Search
151pp. Martin Boyars. £7.95.
0 1745 2705 X

The blues-singer is supposed to trade his soul to the Devil for musical powers: Pecie Whentismw called himself "The High Sheriff from Hell, the Devil's Son-in-Law". Two centuries before Wheatstraw, seventeenth-century traveller Richard Jobson noted that the griot, tribal singer of the Gambia.

Is held in great contempt and is denied their common rite of burial. Instead of which the Corps is left upright in a hollow tree and left there in rot. The reason they

The songs which invoke this nostalgia are often intentionally nostalgic. The writers of "Dixie" and "California Dreamin'" both knew what they were about. It is curious how many American songs compel the singer to wish he were somewhere else (this seems to have reached an extreme in the 1960s with "We Gotta Get Out Of This Place"). Since the nation was populated by millions of souls who had done just that, perhaps it is really not so odd. They had hardly got to Ellis Island before the Irish immigrants were singing "Erin, The Tear And The Smile In Thine Eye" and "Ireland Must Be Heaven, For My Mother Came From There". As belief in the Melting Pot became obligatory, it was more correct to pine for proper American places like Old Virginia and The Blue Hills of Kentucky.

This is where Stephen Foster comes in. Steeped in the English, Scotch and Irish melodies and minstrel songs of his childhood (in the North), he shrank from the genteel fashion for "adoptions" of German and Italian opera (Mozart was translated into parlour pieces with glistening embellishments generally blamed on Rossini), and turned this inherited miscellany into the first really American music. He was the voice of his times reflecting Northern sentimental responses to the "Negro question" in his classic coon songs like "Old Black Joe" and "Massa's in The Cold Ground" and antebellum nostalgia with the likes of "Swanee River". After the false dawn of Stephen Foster there was a reversion to vague sentimentality. But by the 1890s the nation had become manic in its American-ness.

"The United States", the New York Times boasted, "is now the envy of the world". All was prosperity, frantic novelty, and patriotism. Music publishers energetically catered to the whims of the market, responding to public interest in new gadgets, new money, new freedoms (and their consequent insecurities) and national pride. On the stage, George M. Cohan, wrapped in the Stars and Stripes, strutted his song of worship for country and flag, a Jewish immigrant Yankee Doodle Dandy.

By this time, music publishing had moved uptown to 28th Street and Broadway, and was almost entirely dominated by Russian Jews who had fled the pogroms of the 1880s. (They made up one quarter of the population of New York City by 1910). In Tin Pan Alley, as named by a journalist and songwriter, Monroe Rosenfeld, in an article about the industry - hundreds of songwriters and arrangers in cramped cubicles banged away on upright pianos (some with paper in the strings to produce a jazzy, tinny effect). They worked fast. Subtlety was accidental. They kept one eye on the public demand for songs about fascinating new developments like the telephone, automobile, bicycle, flying machine. The other eye was on the competition: should there be a hit with a girl's name or "Goodbye" to the title, or a big seller about a cowboy or a hula dancer or a faithful dog. Performers came to these cubicles for new materials, and singing salesmen, called "pluggers", often waylaid them in the street, in the insistent cacophony. The pluggers were many and aggressive, ingenious

and energetic. The best of the bragged of singing a song fifty times in one evening, by boarding houses and shouting into the throngs on Broadway. They invaded parks, political rallies, six-day bicycle races in Madison Square Gardens, basketball games and the boardwalks at Atlantic City and Coney Island. Always they were pushing the song-the publishers thought should be that week's hit.

One such plugger who came to epitomize the era was Irving Berlin. It was his first steady job. He had fled the Cossack pogroms with his family in 1892 and left home at fifteen, supporting himself as a saloon pianist and singing waiter. He plugged songs for Harry von Tilzer and had published his first song, "Mae From Sunny Italy" by the time he was seventeen. The man who had named himself after an English actor and a German city (he was born Israel Baline) wrote "Alexander's Ragtime Band" when he was twenty. He has been called the best writer in every area of American popular music and represented in song every phase of musical fashion of forty or more years, creating what everyone thinks of as traditional American popular music.

The irony of the birth of American song is summed up in Jerome Kern's comments on the musical version of Don Byrnes' *Messer Marco Polo*. Pointing out to Kern that it would be a story set in China about an Italian and told by an Irishman, Oscar Hammerstein asked what kind of music he would write. "Jerry answered, 'It'll be good Jewish music.'"

man and community saint. Charters, inevitably, sees him as inhabiting an essentially different cultural world from the Mandingo *John Wolf*. The African is a community nationalist and a hard-knocks merchant; the Afro-American a drop-out even among the dropped-out. But this seems a grossly false antithesis.

It arises partly from the absence of historical perspective. What happened to raise Richard Jobson's contemptible cantator of two centuries ago to a figure of local, even regional distinction? How different is the rise in status from, say, the progress of B. B. King, once a scuffling bluesman on the "chitlin' circuit" of black Southern bars, now a black culture hero? Charters neither asks nor answers such questions. The *Guitars* of the early European travellers, the present-day *Blues* of bluesmen living and bluesmen two or three generations dead, all are portrayed in a timeless present.

The chief fault of this book is not that it fails, as Charters admits, to make its case, but that it hardly makes a case for the claim that there is a case to be made. There are indeed African survivals in black American music, and thorough study of the griots may yield further connections. Instead of such a study, Charters offers lightweight musical speculation and some pleasant local-colour journalism.

David Meeker's new edition of *Jazz in the Movies* (Tallman Books, 122 Channing Cross Road, London WC2E 6JN, 0 905983 39 4) covers nearly 4000 films, including television films and series, in which jazz and blues musicians either appear or contribute to the soundtrack. It contains an index of 1477 jazz and blues names as well as eighty rare photographs. Apart from bittings of film portraits of musicians including T. P. Mearns, Sin. Ra. Count Basie, Jay McShann, Sonny Rollins (2) and Nat King Cole (3), our attention is drawn to little-known films such as *Swing Time*, a spiritual report on poultry raising on an industrial scale in France with music by Jacques Loussier, and *Swingtime in Mexico* with Mexico's reigning jazz king.

A Goon and his grievances

By Valentine Cunningham

SPIKE MILLIGAN:
Indefinite Articles and Scuntborpe
150pp. M and J Hobbs in association with Michael Joseph. £7.50.
0 7181 2078 7

There's never been any problem about telling the Goons apart. "Sellers" was the sick one, the slender-toned Lotherio in the Lamborghini. "Secombe" is the big one, the hazard to shipping (Milligan's joke). And "Milligan" is the bad case, looking long, an evident instance of fallen arches, South London and half-shaven, his tea-strainer mustache and ancient stains and unmentionable substances, his cap in tatters, his beard clogged, his mucky raincoat missing buttons and held up with string. He's Worried of Finchley, the man too much in the pub or the bookies or the post-office (where his savings account is by now seriously depleted). He's the reader who chortles over McGonagall's verse in the Lewisham Public Library. He once played cornet in a brass band, and he's still got the hat, though the cornet has rather seized up. He was even a finalist in the Brass Band Concert (Economy Section) held at the Scuntborpe Municipal Baths - as a photograph in this book proves. The boarding-house of Mrs Thrills at Scuntborpe is, of course, his annual resort.

In other words, the persona Spike Milligan creates for himself is for Britain "in a crate labelled SS RAJAPURNA, SOLDIER'S FAMILY, THIS WAY UP". Just so, literary editors, especially "Stilly Willy von Davis" of Punch, are neo-Hitlers, locking Milligan up into 2000 word boxes, expecting him to perform compressed miracles. ("Write 3000 words about television, they said. I suppose they know what they're doing"). The comic's audience, he ends up saying, is the ultimate gaoler - imprisoning elowms into the need to be funny, driving them all in solipsism, nightmare and drink, to Tony Hancock's suicide and Milligan's mental breakdown.

The longuffering of "Milligan". It becomes plain from these collected pieces, its rooted in the great deal that Milligan himself has had to put up with. Milligan is an ordinary man who has endured most of the ordinary insults, degradations, and impositions. As the son of parents in the lower echelons of the British Army in India he was subject to all kinds of ill, including malaria, that were consistently misdiagnosed by incompetent M.O.s. He lived through the freezing bedrooms of the British poor - so degradingly cold of a morning that he'd wriggle into his suit while still under the bedclothes. In the Second World War he was your average Tommy, the butt of hawks in officer's uniforms, his life messed about by Hitler. Now he's your old soldier who still dithers upper-class twits and all people (except Peter Sellers) who are driven in big cars ("Mercedes suffering from diplomatic immunity"). Citty Street, he's found, is as full of bullies as ever the Army was. Bureaucrats who want him to keep signing forms, the people who manage the telephone system, magistrates, policemen, traffic wardens, the perpetrators of Muzak, banks ("legal highway meo"), the vice officials at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square (can they tell the difference, he wonders, between Groucho and Karl Marx?), the ubiquitous front-man called Spokesman Said, and doctors above all, it's medical practitioners that get Milligan's goat. GPs, locums, homeopaths, private hospitals, the nurses and doctors whom he accuses of wilful clumsiness in the way in which they tell him he's had "terminal cancer" - all of them have at one time or another tormented Milligan. They've all, as well, he complains, had their hands on his cash. "Another five guineas", they keep saying.

One good case of malaria. And one of St. Vitus Dance. Pays for a Harley Street Surgeon's Vacation in the South of France. So Milligan sees the world as a place against him, and his kind. He sees the dangers everywhere. One of the most hilarious, but also most disarming, pieces in this collection, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way

tells how Milligan loses his double-bass on a tram, his trumpet under a taxi, his cardboard dickie-bow in the rain, cuts his neck in a car crash, is compelled by a certain Colonel Schnockling-Thun at a rowing club hop to play, single-handedly in the absence of the other musicians, alternately on guitar and trumpet - and all in aid of the wrong gig, at the wrong rowing club, on the wrong night.

No wonder, then, Milligan being such an endangered specimen, that he has become extremely conscious of how the whole human and animal world is full of endangered species. He's mightily preoccupied by battered wives, by inmates of Holloway Prison, by "dead little birds" arriving in he-customer at Heathrow Airport, by men's propensity to destroy each other, especially with nuclear bombs. People are often steamrollered flat in Milligan's narratives - Fusilier O'Brien, ironed out by Milligan's grandfather at the wheel of a military steamroller; "my father", pictured in a wild surmise, as "run over by a steam-roller and... now a book-marker in Lewisham Library". Milligan's characters are frequently being boxed in. Fusilier O'Brien was "boxed in an envelope" Milligan's storm about Letic keeps a crowd of mates in his closet (they fall out when Milligan goes to hang up his coat). Crowd-hungry tube-travellers are jammed into their carriages by "hydraulically operated machines", powerful air jets, "pressurised air cannons". Milligan's family sails for Britain "in a crate labelled SS RAJAPURNA, SOLDIER'S FAMILY, THIS WAY UP". Just so, literary editors, especially "Stilly Willy von Davis" of Punch, are neo-Hitlers, locking Milligan up into 2000 word boxes, expecting him to perform compressed miracles. ("Write 3000 words about television, they said. I suppose they know what they're doing"). The comic's audience, he ends up saying, is the ultimate gaoler - imprisoning elowms into the need to be funny, driving them all in solipsism, nightmare and drink, to Tony Hancock's suicide and Milligan's mental breakdown.

Milligan's article on Tony Hancock is a masterpiece. In several ways its disaffection with the cliché its title announces, "Sad / Funny Men", witnesses to Milligan's desire never to be bound, even by an act of description. More interesting still is its dwelling on Hancock's aggression. Hancock botched his first marriage, hurt his friends, sacked a succession of side-men, gave his script-writers the push, and finally destroyed himself. Milligan hasn't done any of these things, so far as one knows, but he and Milligan don't seem to share on aggression. Both of them are worms who've turned, little men who are bliffling back.

Milligan warns to Australians precisely because they're not. (The thing a fight wouldn't settle, says he). Exasperated by the muzak in his Q&A cabin, he finally chopped through the wiring. In his campaigns, he fights rough, fearlessly naming names; once a Keith Joseph who wants to wreck a nice building, now a Dr. Thomas who has offended Milligan's wife, now the firm of "LADY DELL of Worthing". ("I print their name large") alleged to import those little birds. And for his part, ageing "Milligan" takes hormone pills, refuses to accept Larkin's sexual innuendoes, came along too late for his "Sexual Intercourse/Came Into Force/Right from the beginning/Along with singing". He behaves rather like his mirror image, the tramp in the photograph captioned "An homage libe dans la rue à Scuntborpe", who's clutching a maoist.

The British Film Institute's Information Division has acquired Southern Television's archive of scripts, stills and programme documents. This collection represents the largest single donation to the Institute of television documentation to date, and will join other special collections from donors such as Troy Kennedy Martin and Trevor Griffiths. The BFI acts as a clearing-house for information about TV and the cinema, and its material is accessible to all members.

mac and warmly eyeing a fetching bird in long legs and short shorts. Together, Milligan and his mythicised self will take on the world, if only by bad-mouthing it. Nothing stays sacred with them - the Pope, nuns, blacks, "Chinke-Pops", Jewish carol-singers, Welshmen, Princess Anne, landladies and (this book's running subtext or leitmotif) Scuntborpe. The jokes about the lusts of Old Age Pensioners, about Mrs Thrills's cooking, her husbands' implied disappearances, her prolonged reign of terror (a photographed hospital ship is said to contain her victims), are as sick as can be. They're the kind of jest in which Dr Crippen, the wife-murderer (Mrs Thrills's cat is named Crippen), is an important touchstone.

If all jokes make for anarchy, sleek jokes envisage super-anarchy. The two Milligans go in for the anorectic action, of course, but it's the energies of anarchy language that they above all seek to release. They often resort to dictionary entries (for "Eccentric" it might be, or "Gratitude", or "Honesty") and then proceed to unplug, invert, turn inside out, shake up, rattle and generally disorientate them. This is certainly one way of enrolling the English language in the fight for English people's freedoms. Using language in that struggle was, of course, Cobbett's way: his *Grammar* subverted grammars as a way of subverting governments. And the great Cobbett by no means loses in this comparison. "What about the English people?", demands an MP in a debate about defence expenditure in "Milligan's" fantasy about becoming a scriptwriter for Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. "Oh then?" sneers the Minister of Defence. Cobbett of Farnham could scarcely have made the point more sharply than at such moments Milligan (and "Milligan") of Brockley do.

Beating the system

By T. J. Binyon

WILLIAM HALL:
Raising Cain
The Authorized Biography
260pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £7.50.
0 283 98777 4

Like many in his profession, Michael Caine goes under a false name. Rightly, probably, for Maurice Micklewhite seems no more likely to have box office appeal than did Marlon Morrison or Isur Damsky, but a romantic-sounding couple better known as John Wayne and Kirk Douglas.

Born in South London in 1933, Caine went into acting after National Service, beginning as ASM for the Horsham repertory company. Then came the usual sad story of unemployment, and occasional work as a television extra or to advertisements. Gradually the parts got bigger, and he broke into films in 1956, when he fought - in an unbilled part - alongside Stoley Baker and Harry Andrews on *A Hill in Korea*. Other films, mostly unmemorable, followed, with an occasional named part: Weber in *For the Cause*; Mooney (a deaf and dumb Irishman) in *Solo for Sparrow*. Fame came in 1963 when he exchanged his native Cockney for a cut-glass accent to play Lieutenant G. G. in *Zulu*, a performance which certainly merits the italicization it receives in *Leila Halliwell's Film Guide*. After this a couple of almost one-man films: *The Ipcress File* (1965) - the first of three adaptations of Len Deighton thrillers - and *Alfie* (1966) established him securely with an Oscar nomination for the lecherous Londoner.

Since then he's covered a wide range. He's been a violent crook in *Get Carter* (1970); and a comic one with Noel Coward as his associate, in

The Italian Job (1969). He's been married to Elizabeth Taylor (Zee and Co., 1971), and to Maggie Smith (California Suite, 1978). He's had a second Oscar nomination, playing opposite Laurence Olivier in *Shiraz* (1972). But most of all, he's been in and out of enough uniforms to kill a battalion. In *Play Dirty* (1968) he was a captain; getting his shoes full of sand while blowing up Rommel's petrol dumps. A year later he'd changed services and was up to Squadron Leader in *Battle of Britain*, but was then immediately busted down to private and shipped off to help the Yanks in the Pacific (700 *East the Hero*, 1969). After a spot of leave he bounced back as colonel - or rather Oberst - in *The Eagle has Landed* (1976) and two years later, like another Benedict Arnold, turned his coat but retained his rank for *A Bridge Too Far* (1976).

Most recently we've seen him as a crazed transvestite psychiatrist, slicing Angel Dickinson up with a razor (*Death to Kill*, 1980); and as a football-mad POW, taking the field with Bobby Moore, Pele and Ardisles (*Escape to Victory*, 1981). Forthcoming atrocities are *Deathtrap*, an adaptation of Ira Levin's stage thriller, and *The Hand*, a shocker which promises well by numbering among its credits a Dr John Handley, described as "Technical advisor (neuropsycho)".

Before the big break came, Caine had apparently toyed with the idea of giving up the stage for the pen. Would that he had, at least, written this book. It would be possible to no readers are capable of retaining an anecdote in their memory for longer than it takes to read a page; even, possibly, his conviction that to write of "public and expensively proportioned" merit, write well all this could have been fore-given had he in addition made some attempt to get beyond the superficial, to act, if only for a moment, as

bio, rather than hagiographer. As it is, the deepest probe into character analysis comes from an astrological chart prepared by "a raven-haired soothsayer". "Like all Fish, he is a complex character. Romantic, yet cynical, sensitive, dramatic, restless, tending to expect too much." Nothing much to worry about here; flattering, indeed. But then, no doubt tossing her raven locks, she utters a dire warning: "an ill-starred Jupiter... could very easily result in him becoming overweight if he were not careful".

Setting this aside, it seems clear from the sub-text that Caine is an intelligent, technically accomplished, highly professional actor, with whom it is extremely easy to work. He has been in a lot of bad films and some appalling ones. But then, there are a lot of bad films, and it's hard to criticize someone who makes it perfectly plain that he's in the business primarily to pay the rent. And he's been unlucky, too. In that several good films, to which he contributed a lot, sank almost without trace. This was true of *The Last Valley* (1970), in which he shared the lead with Omar Sharif. It was a literate, reasonably subtle and convincingly set, but perhaps the cinema public just wasn't ready for the Thirty Years War. It's harder to explain the relative failure of *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975) from the Kipling short story, directed by John Huston, with Caine and Sean Connery striking sparks off one another.

Caine now lives in a large bungalow on top of Beverly Hills with his wife (former Miss Gwyneth) third in *Miss World* (1967) and daughter. There's an indoor Jacuzzi in the rear lounge, "with hot foaming water to massage tension out of tired muscles at the end of a tiring day at the studio", and fine wines are stacked against the wall. "I beat the system," he's quoted as saying in the 1975 page of the book. "Well, up to a point."



Robin Williams as Popeye, the title-role in Altman's film of 1980, from Robert Altman by Jean-Loup Bourget (127pp. Paris: Edilg. 2 85601 001 6).

C. & W.

For Sara

Musicians from the cradle... Birth, marriage and death, to the whine of steel guitars. Rows of peacocks - high kicks at the hoe-down. You start putting a few words together for a song, and they turn into a complaint.

I'm a simple man. Living is never easy, but women are flowers when you can get them. And they can be mean, or they can cheat on you. Her hair was long and black as ravens' wings. In five minutes, she killed our love with words.

The memory is lethal, I stayed drunk for years. In this world, misfortune doesn't happen singly. Lightning always strikes at the same spot. My best cowboy shirt was destroyed by fire, I can't have trusted the strings of my guitar.

Michael Hofmann

commentary

A fanciful world

By Frances Spalding

Carol Weight RA
Royal Academy Diploma Galleries

"The world we live in" is the title of one of Carol Weight's paintings, and the theme of many in this exhibition. More particularly, this world is that of South London, of railway stations, red and yellow brick and evergreen trees in small back gardens; an area hardly pretending to gentility, scavenged and furrowed. What nukes these paintings for from dreary is the sense of something electric in the atmosphere. The scenes are always inhabited and sometimes contain human or religious dramas. But even when the figures merely walk down the street, one receives the impression that this is a world on edge.

If Carol Weight has a liking for the underside of life he has none for the art world and its critics, and enjoys "sending up the highbrows". He is, as he says, a little "out of the normal run of things" while also remaining happily and very firmly ensconced within the eccentric mainstream of English art. For many years Professor of Painting at the Royal College, he has also exhibited at the Royal Academy's annual summer exhibitions since 1931. He is a prolific artist; affectionately regarded by a great many painters who were his students; and admired by a wider than usual public, not least because he has always insisted on keeping his prices low. This retrospective surveys fifty years of his work, during which

period he has never been deflected, by modernism, market pressures or high-brow critics, from painting what interests him. From the moment (in 1932) when he portrayed an elderly lady swiping an escaped lion with her umbrella, it was clear that theoretical abstraction would pass him by.

He is also an intriguing figure because he unites two distinct strands in British art. While he was still a student (first at Hammersmith Art School, then at Goldsmith's College), Christopher Wood died. From the early paintings exhibited, one can guess that Weight first modelled himself on Wood, absorbing his naive style which was then popular among painters of the 7 & 5 Society. His touch is more graphic than Wood's, but still crudely expressive, and it gives an urgency to his four-panel painting describing the escape of a zebra (an animal also painted by Wood) from the zoo during an air raid. In order to extend his control of narrative, Weight has clearly looked at Stanley Spencer, not at his technique but at his ability to deploy the drama across the entire scene. By applying an essentially painterly style to narrative, Weight is able to give it a refreshing immediacy: his paintings do tell a story but they also delight the eye.

Essential to his story is his choice of setting. A newspaper photograph of Crystal Palace gardens sent him to the spot in search of a background for his "Betrayal of Christ". He found a half-ruined flight of steps ornamented with a tiled urn that still hung on to its base by a thread. Placed in the centre of his picture, this urn becomes a slightly obvious

equivalent to the impending arrest. Elsewhere his use of background detail to enhance content is more subtle. In "Fury" a boy beats another while the rest of the gang run off, their flight repeated by the sharply receding wall. The approaching bobber causes less sense of panic than the branch that extends menacingly towards the victim and his oppressor. In "The Moment" a child stares straight out as if suddenly checked by something seen; behind him the desolate empty street stretches across the long thin format like an ache of his scream.

Much of Carol Weight's subject matter may spring from his own childhood experiences, though Norman Rosenthal, in his interview with the artist printed in the catalogue, does not explore this. There is, however, an insistent strain of melancholy in this show, and a noticeable sympathy with suffering, even if the suffering is only unlearned fear. Weight is as much interested in the tensions of modern life as he is in their setting, and like Munch he makes them palpable by presenting them in a deliberately heightened key. He has no time for orthodox forms of religion but resorts frequently to biblical subjects as useful carriers of human drama. Moreover, his desire to give the normal a magical frisson leads him frequently to the supernatural. Guests make a regular appearance in his art, and frequently trouble his street-matter-of-fact in this zany, fanciful world which in the hands of a different artist might quickly become parochial and restricting.



"The Assumption of the Virgin", 1972, by Carol Weight. The painting can be seen at the Carol Weight retrospective reviewed here.

A serious life

By Peter Keating

A Curious Life for a Lady
National Library of Scotland

Isabella L. Bird led the kind of life that seems calculated to mock our modern view of Victorian middle-class women. She began conventionally enough. Her father was a well-to-do, fiercely Sabbatarian, Church of England vicar, and Isabella grew up in the country parish of Tatton in Cheshire where, because of her weak constitution, she was encouraged to spend as much time as possible in the open air. In 1850, at the age of nineteen, she died an operation on her spine: it was not fully successful and continuing ill-health appeared to indicate a sedentary, semi-invalid, future for her.

Then in 1854 she was sent to Portsmouth, apparently in an attempt to cure her of insomnia. What happened to her sleepless nights is not recorded, but Portsmouth was good for her in other ways. Two articles about the visit were published in *The Leisure Hour*, and from that moment until her death in 1904, she travelled purposefully about the world, observing, negotiating, campaigning, and recording her impressions in a series of best-selling books.

Her first journey abroad was to Canada, and the United States; this led to the publication of *The Englishwoman in America* (1856) and the more specialized *Aspects of Religion in the United States* (1859). For the next twelve years she concentrated on Scotland. After the death of her father, Isabella had moved with her mother and sister to Edinburgh. It was here that she established a solid reputation as a journalist, publishing articles mainly in religious magazines on subjects as diverse as Ragged Schools, Latin hymns, and the poetry of Donne. She also began exploring the Highlands, an area she had first visited with her father. She published *Scotland and its People* (1861), a book which, in connection with the Highlanders, lasted until 1900, when

her attempts to convert the inhabitants of Tobermory to temperance were met with a decision that drove her away.

Not that she stayed in any one place for long. She went to Hawaii and wrote *Six Months in the Sandwich Islands* (1875); to America again (*A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, 1879); to parts of Japan which no European had visited before (*Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, 1880); to Persia, China, India, Korea, and Morocco, where in six months she travelled over 10,000 miles on a black charger presented to her by the Sultan. The magnificent horse stood so high that she had to carry a lightweight ladder with her to get on and off.

The exhibition at the National Library of Scotland (until February 13) celebrates the 150th anniversary of Isabella Bird's birth. Books, manuscripts, photographs and maps, trace her remarkable life and travels stage by stage, and offer a compelling portrait of "useless energy". As though she travels themselves, as though enough, there are constant surprises for anyone who follows the life through. At the age of fifty she married the doctor who had tended her dying sister; six years later she trained as a nurse; another five years on and she is studying photography so that she could illustrate her own books.

The informative leaflet accompanying the exhibition stresses that the early journeys were undertaken for health reasons; and that those after her husband's death in 1886 were motivated by her desire to establish medical missions. Such explanations can, surely, carry only part of the truth. The curious journey across deserts and up mountains, by caravan to Tiberias and back to Wucheng, must have had at its back of them some personal drive that it is now beyond the skills of biographers to discern — possibly so personal that Isabella Bird herself could not have explained it.

The exhibition does, however, offer some suggestive hints. When criticized for her flamboyant travelling costumes, she defended herself

by stating "Travellers are privileged to do the most improper things with perfect propriety". And her husband, who enjoyed only five years of married life with Isabella before his early death, is quoted as saying: "I have only one formidable rival in Isabella's heart, and that is the high tableland of Central Asia".

It is easy to see Isabella Bird as an oddity, a lady who led a "curious life", to take the title of the exhibition — a title which is taken in turn from Patricia Barr's biography published in 1970. There is nothing wrong with this view of her as long as it does not conceal what was probably the principal motivating force — a genuine love of travel for the adventure and wonder it offered. The Royal Scottish Geographical Society recognized this when they made her their first woman Fellow. In 1891, the Royal Geographical Society did the same in the following year.

There were critics, of course. Punch thought the mere idea of a lady explorer terribly silly and commented that the notion of "travellers in skirts" was "too scarpic".

Let them stay and mind the babies, or hem our ragged skirts; But they mustn't can't, and shan't be geographic.

But, whether Punch had its tongue in or out of its cheek, it was wrong and the Royal Scottish Geographical Society was right. In this respect, the most revealing items in the attractive exhibition are the recent reprints and translations of Isabella Bird's books. They suggest that the descendants of the peoples she travelled among regard her life as having been serious as well as curious.

The British Council has recently published a series of six cassettes in which literary critics discuss their approaches to the study of English Literature. The series includes recordings of conversations with Derek Brewer, Stephen Heath, Arnold Kettle, Geoffrey Leach, I. A. Richards and Raymond Williams. *Critics on Criticism* (5 per cassette excluding VAT) is available from the Design, Production and Publishing Department, the British Council, 33, Davies Street, London W1Y 2AA.

Miniaturization

By David Nokes

Gulliver in Lilliput
BBC TV

Recently Michael Foot recommended that anyone standing for political office in London, Dublin or Washington should be required to take a compulsory examination in *Gulliver's Travels*. Political hopefuls may safely omit *Gulliver in Lilliput* from their list of study aids. It's a long while since the BBC Sunday serial has offered such a travesty of a classical text, but Barry Letts has followed up the outstanding success of *Great Expectations* with no less remarkable flop. The audience for these serials may be composed largely of children, but the BBC has taken a Brobdingnagian step backwards in reducing Swift's satire to this coy, bowdlerized nursery romp. Radio 4 recently broadcast an ambitious dramatization of the whole of *Gulliver's Travels*. Yahoos, Struldbruggs, Houyhnhnms and all. The virtues of that production only highlight the inadequacies of this.

It's hard to know why Swift should still be considered fair game for such treatment. Versions of *The Travels*, abridged for children, have been around for centuries, of course. But then for centuries even Shakespeare had to undergo the indignity of being patched up, toned down, abridged, polished, and "corrected". Yet one would hardly expect the BBC Shakespeare series to offer us Tate's improved *King Lear* or Theobald's methodized *Richard II*, though both works have considerably more to recommend them than Letts's *Gulliver in Lilliput*. When once you have thought of big men and little men, observed Johnson of *Gulliver's Travels*, "it is very easy to do all the rest." How wrong he was. But then he lived in no age before the discovery of colour separation overlay. It's obvious that this is a production in which technique has taken priority over text. We also have Swift's tale of big men and little men trans-

formed into slpstick — perhaps because January is the traditional pantomime season — and adorned with remarkable visual effects. "Don't quibble, Ribble", pouts king Gelbasto in vintage *Crackerjack* style, as Swift's own satiric wit is jettisoned in favour of straight-forward kneebait.

The main weakness of the adaptation is that the narrative is taken away from Gulliver, and distributed variously among the Lilliputians. Thus the central ironic thread of the book is lost, and along with it the shape of Swift's satire. In attempting to turn Swift's Lilliputians into full-blown caricatures, Barry Letts faced one major problem: Swift's Lilliputians speak, naturally enough, Lilliputian. Consequently all the dialogue, the back-biting, flattery and intrigues which were so fitting, have had to be invented for the television series. However, instead of raiding the resources of Swift's own *Pollie Conversation* for these exchanges, Letts has come up with an idiom that lurches unconvincingly between the clichés of Restoration comedy, and the whimsy of *Alice in Wonderland*. No one of it sounds remotely like Swift. Jonathan Cecil as the foppish king, Linda Polan as the Tantatrice queen, and Elisabeth Saldon as the court coquette produce effective little cameo performances, but they are overwhelmed in a production which seems terrified of taking itself seriously. The predictable harpsichord music, the stagey sets and pantomime atmosphere all confirm the familiar misconception that miniaturization must be accompanied by trivialization.

The British Film Institute has just announced that its Broadcasting Research Unit has set up a working party to consider the future development of the technologies of cable, satellite and video. The working party, whose members include Kelvin Scott, John Birt, Peter Menzies and James Lee, will look at the "likely social impact" of these technologies and will call for evidence from individuals or groups concerned. All enquiries should be sent to Broadcasting Research Unit, BFI, 127, Charing Cross Road, London WC2C 0BA.

commentary

Supply the missing words

By Paul Jennings

to time I come across one of about Rapid Reading, where you courses for executives, teachers, civil have to absorb quickly a lot of greatly increased speed.

of the method seems to be that horizontally left to right understand it. Rapid Reading involves as a unit middle of each line eye moves vertically down worry, they say, if at first the misses beginning and of each line; with practice you will glance more to it than

simply not strong-willed enough. I must go back, in spite of what they say, to that passage. Ah yes. "Don't worry if at first the eye misses the beginning and end words of each line. With practice you will take in the whole line at a glance." But surely there must be more to it than — no, come on, must practise

after all fee in the region of £100 for a week's try as I will, to whole line at a quite make sense going back almost irresistible the hell have I just read? Perhaps it would be better to poetry, with its shorter this kind of thing

now are ended. These foretold you were all melted into thin air, into the baseless fabric of cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous solemn temples, the great like this institutional page, not a rack behind. We are such dreams are made on, and our little is rounded with a sleep. Sir, I am vex'd

fair test? Apart from was getting mere such a famous supplied by memory. In any case each word such a passage weight of significance gist of the sense even though no "spare" words are

of poetry, however, is the exact order. Lascelles Abercrombie incantation own poetic logic inalienable, to alter even one destroyed, indeed there a competition in *Time and Tide* just this, and I've always winning entries:

If I should die, think only this of me: There is some corner of a foreign field

That is for ever Great Britain and Northern Ireland

surely ne such thing as Rapid of poetry, and I don't suppose that is who take these poems. They are more likely to reports, economic analyses, technical such. Perhaps it is just possible heavy reading lists, although English literature at such a gallop, surely? What's the if, say, the famous second paragraph of Dickens's *Bleak* out as

Fog up the river, where it and meadows; fog down the tiers of shipping, and the waterside (and dirty) city. Fog creeping into the fog lying out on the —

not turn it into Joyce, for sake! Surely you can't rapid-read anything so savourable as

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among

the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards . . .

instance, what the Essex and those cabooses lost?

poetry or literature, but day-to-required reading. But even here, there are two basic problems understand it, and (b) will I remember anyway not much point concepts all jumbled in the all, even with old-style left-to-right re-read the whole paragraph, so what chance of with this tunnel vision, when often one has missed the altogether by the straight down the middle?

other hand, the more I look to have a curious correspondence with of mind induced by the chaotic modern

I mean, look at that of what I so far, haven't you? The fact is, most of what we books, let alone newspapers and in the ever-increasing flood of through superfluous data to the much produced in our minds in the end.

will show what I mean:

I, fact, the Catholic extraordinary-ly non-authentic for instance Cordelia explained as provincial ignorance — who remembers church Latin would ever say *quomodo sedet sola livi-tas* those Downs and Ampleforth advisers paid for! accents of present-day RADA

"Sebastian" at the hook of their throats lark that Snobbery, after all heaven a hell of a surprise to Waugh Carlton club with the right people certain elegiac quality of loneliness nineteenth-century Catholicism Wilde. Francis Thompson but mere nostalgia grace not restricted to recusant aristos if at great mosh of viewers moved, let alone snored?

2. In *Britain*, soy, attracted a great and sodomy in a National Theatre audience. Howard Brenton is an established establishment thirty years ago. It is a matter of asking the right parallel between occupied Britain and the return of censorship, which nobody for the wrong reasons anyway. As for the language, there cannot be many or Tunbridge Wells for that matter. Its merits as a play I am bound no relation between the two when the fuss has died not of morality but the theatre.

3. notorious opening in bed with my catmitten when Ali bull by the horns as a Catholic, though the concepts of good and length itself is taken of an immense intellectual Burgess wryly admits himself. In the vast parade nearly a quarter of a million sins in which the novelist is God asked to confirm a miracle in Chicago when the canonization of by any reckoning a major writer.

so on, this, it occurs to me that after Rapid Reading we Rapid Writing be fun.

An unfinished history of the word

By Robert Burchfield

The English Language
BBC TV

The English language, it would appear, arrived in these islands, with much tribulation and darkness of deed, from the past-filled bogs of Frisia, through the waves to the fens and reeds of the English countryside. After many battles mournfully celebrated to lugubrious poems, it moved on by means of the Bayeux tapestry, some lovingly handled scrolls or rolls, much chanting of Latin in English churches, and a pretty manuscript of Chaucer's work, to the entertaining vocabulary of some players on the steps of Lincoln Cathedral. By then Thivillius ruled, OK, and the first stage of the growth of our greatest national product, the English language, had come to an end, round about 1500 AD. "The stage is now set for the English of William Shakespeare", the voice said, but, alas, there was no promise of further episodes to come.

A pity. There were some errors and misconceptions (on which more in a moment) and once or twice I was reminded of a television programme about Jane Austen some time ago when the only sentence that survived from what a famous Austenian scholar actually said to the rehearsal was "Of course she is simply the greatest English novelist". But in general the programme (written by Robert McCrum and produced by Bill Cran) was successful from both an auditory and a visual point of view.

The gashed throat of the miraculously preserved tribesman in a Danish bog was a chilling reminder that our forebears were no angels. The "Sutton Hood" helmet and "jewellery show" as a backdrop to part of a lecture by Professor Loyn about the complexity and sophistication of the art and the literature of the Anglo-Saxons reminded anyone who did not know it already that the artefacts

of our ancestors are comparable with at any rate some of the treasures of the Mycenaeans and the Chinese.

Historical events were presented with unavoidable speed. We were carried along buoyantly from Tacitus' seven tribes, the Germani, who worshipped Mother Earth, to the arrival of the Jutes, Angles, Saxons and Frisians in the fifth century, the seeking of Ludiastarne in 793, the death in 1066 of the last English-speaking king before Henry V, and then Henry V himself using English in official documents in 1417 when he landed in France. Alfred somehow saved the English language by winning some battles against the Danes, and the unflattering might have assumed that it then went into some dark pit and was not rediscovered until Geoffrey Chaucer miraculously found it. No matter. There are desperate difficulties in presenting the history of the language when all its earliest speakers, of course, left only written records, and the rest is silence.

The sub-titles, translating the passages being read in the language of the originals, pointing immediately after the BBC2 News with its sub-titles, could have suggested that we all suffer from deafness quite apart from an inability to make out the vowels or the syntax of our ancestors. In the event they were for the most part unobtrusively helpful to the uninitiated, and did not cruelly divert the attention of those who knew the originals. I noticed only one inaccuracy: in the *Battle of Maldon* "he exalted the warriors" should have been "exhorting". At least I think I read "exalted" but, entirely faded out much more quickly than (say) football scores.

The female narrating voice used the "dreadful" selection "pronunciation", but the actors in their articulation of these early forms of English, even if some of them (a much-respected figure in Oxford) used an undisguised Australian accent to persuade listeners that kings kissed queens in Old English in an unmissable way. Because of the facts of

inflectional life they could not be taken to be queens kissing kings.

Several major debatable assumptions were made with no hint of qualification. Chief among these was the modish, but entirely improbable, view that creolization lay behind the loss of inflections at the end of the Old English period. Dr Christopher Page sang some lines from *Beowulf* delightfully but no one said that J. C. Pope's famous musicalization of the poem has gained only minimal support since his *Rhythm of Beowulf* was published in 1942. The view that Received Pronunciation emerged from the Oxford-Cambridge-London language triangle is now largely rejected in favour of the view that London English, influenced by the speech of immigrants from the Midlands, North, and elsewhere, is a satisfactory source.

On to modern times, and we were shown a class of students in a language laboratory at Keele University, pleasantly chirping out Old English sentences. This was a revelation. Nothing remotely resembling this has ever happened in Oxford in my experience. By contrast the band of "patriots" called "The English Companions", by whom Old English is still regarded as "a living language", was depressingly eccentric and out of place in the programme. A chairperson, a *thegn*, and a *thyle* declaimed some Old English ("wez hall" said the chairperson in an exuberantly RP accent), while the wind rustled through their costumes on a bare slope near Maldon.

A present-day Frisian farmer was asked to pronounce the modern Frisian equivalents of the words *cow, lamb, goat, foal, boat, dung, and rain*. The implication, not entirely baseless but not leading very far, was that the sturdy similarity of his pronunciation of these words and ours somehow equated rural languages with unchanging and wholesome virtues. A Yorkshire farmer, in dark glasses beside modern farming equipment, spoke a sentence or two in Yorkshire dialect, and the dialect scholar Stanley Ellis declared that what he had said contained some

well-preserved Middle English words and sounds. But were not both of these examples of the widespread fallacy that the survival of selected elements of speech from earlier times, demonstrates regional or linguistic superiority? The Americans often claim to speak English that is "closer to" Elizabethan English than ours. All they mean is that some Elizabethan English features are preserved in American English that are not found in present-day British English. But they forget that far more features of their speech have developed independently in North America.

The identification and interpretation of the early stages of our language is a worthy subject for television, and one all too seldom attempted. It is to be hoped that the BBC will not leave us in suspense for too long about the dazzling swoops and swerves of the language since 1500. They might even consider presenting some of the earlier centuries again with emphases on different things, including runes, illuminated manuscripts, inscriptions (in addition to that on the Kirkdale sundial), the Alfred Jewel, and something a little more linguistically ambitious than the paradigm of the definite article. For the moment, however, one is extremely grateful for what they gave us all on January 7.

The National Council of Teachers of English has given the 1981 David H. Russell Award to Michael A. K. Halliday for distinguished research in the teaching of English. Halliday has been Professor of Linguistics at the University of Sydney, Australia, since 1976. He has served as a visiting professor and scholar at several American universities, including Indiana University. He was a lecturer in Chinese at the University of Cambridge and has taught linguistics at Edinburgh. His works for teachers of English include *Explorations in the Fundamentals of Language* (1973), *Learning how to Mean: Explorations in the Development of Language* (1975), *Cohesion in English* (with R. Hassan, 1976), and *Language as a Social Semiotic* (1978).

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André Masson

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Oxford University Press

commentary

A personal vision

By Charles Madge

Humphrey Jennings: Film-Maker.
Painter, Poet
Riverside Studios

I well remember Humphrey Jennings saying in conversation back in the 1930s that he did not in the least care what traces of himself he left behind. Yet eventually he left twenty-five films, quite a large number of photographs and paintings, a precious handful of poems and the manuscript, almost ready for publication, of *Pandemonium* - a massive collection of texts arranged chronologically and chosen to illustrate transformations in our way of looking at the world between 1660 and 1866. There was also his Cambridge thesis on Thomas Gray, which T. S. Eliot would have liked to publish, but which seems to have disappeared entirely; also, if my own memory and letters are to be trusted, I was shown in the early 1930s extensive notes for a history of English poetry which have likewise vanished.

It is by his films - especially his wartime films - that Jennings is principally remembered. Their emotional impact is as immediate now as when they were first shown; and it is possible that *Fires were Stoked* (1942) is the most notable work of art about the war that was produced during the war. To turn from film to the paintings and poems - with which he is confronted with the problem of a unique kind of creativity, and also perhaps to be offered a key to the problem.

The exhibition at Riverside Studios includes forty-seven oil paintings, twenty drawings and watercolours and fourteen collages chosen with sensitive insight by Sir Roland Penrose, with whom Jennings helped to organize the International Surrealist Exhibition of 1936. The titles of the paintings often refer to nuclear images which held a persistent place in the painter's imagination. Thus there is a "House in the Woods" in 1935, and another in 1940. Horses and locomotives recur through the 1930s; there is a "Landscape and River" in 1937 and more paintings in 1943, 1947 and 1948. The titles also reveal that Jennings's vision was historical - that he was in some sense working out for himself a history of the imagination in all its manifestations. Thus we have such titles as "London in the 19th Century", "Byron's House at Milton", "Statue of Richard Cobden at Salford", "The Great Fire of London", "Guy Fawkes", "William Morris" and so on. However, sometimes the link can only be related to the painting by a large of his energy. As when "Portrait of Sir Isaac Newton" shows a snowy mountain peak in the background and in the foreground three apples on a plinth of primes.

Many art critics and some painters have been unwilling to attribute much importance to the paintings, while accepting the emotional power and visual mastery of the films. One can understand this and yet be convinced that to get inside, or anywhere near, the special personal vision here expressed, the whole of Humphrey Jennings's work, or what remains of it, should be admitted as genuine. If only one could add to this the spoken words, could get Jennings to walk one round the exhibition, talking as he went. All those who heard him talking about poetry, about painting, about film, are agreed that there was nothing else in their experience to equal the brilliance, the originality, the spontaneity of his talk - that evanescent art form, I am not even sure that he would have talked so well if he had known that he was being recorded. His words do not form a coherent whole, but they do form a poignancy to the work which do remain.



Humphrey Jennings

Cicely in America during the war, notes and poems, and even a review for the *TLS* of *The English* by Ernest Barker, dated August 7, 1948.

Anyone prepared to go "in search of" the elusive Humphrey Jennings at Riverside Studios should, I think, turn from the paintings to the films and then back to the paintings again, drawing as much as possible on the work of Mary-Lou Jennings's "Chronology and Documents", an available, alas, up till now in unpublished form. It is the work which absorbed so much of his energy from 1943 up to his death in 1951. *Pandemonium*, originally accepted for publication by Herbert Read on behalf of Routledge, but later rejected on the strength of peculiarly idiotic comments by his colleagues. Later plans for publication have sometimes been fulfilled. In my belief, only with the publication of this work will the full stature of Humphrey Jennings and of his productions in all their diversity become finally apparent. But the exhibition, and the book accompanying it, are performing a valuable service in drawing more attention to a neglected genius, in whom visual and verbal faculties were simultaneously developed to an altogether exceptional extent.

Women and Pornography

Sir, - I should like to comment on two related reviews by J. O. Weightman and Roger Scruton (January 1). The three books reviewed deal with pornography, and sexism in language.

Leaving aside the value of the books themselves, my objection is that both reviewers give the powerful impression that they dislike not the contents of the books but the fact that they deal with issues which in themselves are seen as a threat; Weightman fears, rather hysterically, that women might become extinct, whereas Scruton talks of an "assault" against which "we" need protection. In addition both articles demonstrate ignorance of the research that has been done in these fields, which weakens their arguments further.

J. G. Weightman takes exception to being excluded, as a male, from the audience of the two books he reviewed. If the books are not aimed at him, is he qualified to review them? However good or bad the books, the authors presumably have the right to choose their readership; a book for railway enthusiasts would necessarily exclude fishing buffs. For centuries women have found themselves excluded from the majority of what they see and read, whether it is philosophy, religion, literature or history.

Roger Scruton, reviewing Mary Vetterling-Braggin's *Sexist Language*, will not, or cannot, see how the English language excludes, makes invisible and belittles fifty per cent of the species. To him it is a "fantasy issue", unimportant because he himself is not excluded. He is quite right to say that "my sex is fundamental to my self-consciousness".

I think of myself as a male... He is privileged to have a language with which to express it. Women do not have that privilege, and it is arrogance to dismiss women's justified resentment of this fact as "hysteria". "Man", "mankind", "he", "him" etc are not neutral in English; they carry a male image and define the species as male. If they were neutral one could comfortably say "Man gives birth to live young" or "he breastfeeds". Because of the inevitable male (and therefore excluding) image of the words, the phrase sounds odd. Modern officialdom now talks more gently to "you", but "you" is a man - pick up any DHSS leaflet to prove it. If women are not excluded from normal language, whence the need for the very common "lady doctor" etc? What are women to make of programmes such as the BBC's "Making of Mankind"? Are they included? No - all the visual references were to the evolution of the male. (A scientific nonsense, by the way.) Being thus excluded, may not women at least react and discuss it among themselves, without having their discussions dismissed by J. G. Weightman as "sterile female yammering"? Are those really the terms of useful criticism?

Mr. Weightman cannot believe it when he is told that women find the universal parading of the female body as the object of lust (but not of much else) deeply offensive. Would he do the same to a coloured man who told him he resented images of jolly coons with big rubbery lips and "cruel male lust" is the foundation of "even of spurious sexual love" and that's the whole point: women quite rightly object to this view of male things else. Yet Weightman claims to be an "average, liberal English male" who has long been "sympathetic" to the cause of women's rights. Playboys and the like are acceptable to this average male because they do him no harm, he enjoys it, and they may even help him on his wedding night. The women "look extremely attractive and healthy" - so they must be choosing to sell themselves. In this way... Everything is...

acceptable (to men), but nevertheless they don't want their "nearest and dearest" staring out at them from the glossy pages. What price self-determination for women when the "average male" operates such double standards as these?

Roger Scruton, on the other hand, cannot believe that the English language negates the validity of women. Both have a lot of homework to do. Scruton dislikes much about these essays, for instance their "jejune premises" - an attribute well represented in his own writings. At the start he accuses that "a person can be powerful without exercising control oneself" is an unintelligible sentence. It is rather, but less so than his own proposal of "himself" in place of "oneself". He is unable to see that the image behind "himself" is male, and therefore inaccurate when referring to "persons". "A mammal feeds the baby himself" is not right; the word "himself" is only sometimes inclusive of both sexes, and that's not accurate enough. This is the true "grammatical aberration" and not the original example; it was artificially imposed barely a century ago.

In his last paragraph he complains about "unthinking prejudice", but his whole article reeks of it. What else could suddenly make him abandon his respect for the American Modern Languages Association - that "bastion of serious criticism and literary scholarship" at the moment they decide to acknowledge the harmful effects of sexist language, except prejudice? Does he not have an "ounce of scepticism" or "the preparedness to entertain the opposite of one's own convictions" to tell him that they may be right and he wrong? Shilliness and hysteria may be in the mind of the beholder. Will research reveal his cause?

J. A. PENROSE.
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Sir, - Is it too much to hope that under its new regime your paper will give significant books about women for women to review? J. G. Weightman, reviewing Andrew Dworkin and Susan Griffin (January 1), admits to feeling at a loss, declares himself a "liberal English male" sympathetic to women's rights, and then indulges in a rambling discussion of women's problems calculated to infuriate even a non-violent feminist like me. Pornography, according to him, is a comparatively harmless modern phenomenon. The girls who are photographed in pornographic poses look "attractive and healthy". So much better than the diseased Victorian prostitutes with their implied threat to Linda Lovelace, like the fox, probably liked it. Little boys will sometimes play with dolls' houses if no one takes them. And many other weighty observations of the kind.

Just in case any reader has failed to get the message, the second page of Mr. Weightman's long review is illustrated by a picture from a new book on Eastern Erotic Art. It shows one of the celestial females who reward dead heroes with heavenly pleasures in the act of unfastening her skirt.

JANE AIKEN HODGE.
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Dostoevsky and the Jews

Sir, - Both Robert Alter, in his review of David L. Goldstein's *Dostoevsky and the Jews* (July 3) and James L. Rice (Letters, November 27) diagnose Dostoevsky ("accuse") as more correct considering the contexts as suffering from paranoia and paranoid delusions. Rice compounds his error by declaring that Dostoevsky's epilepsy is evidence that he was more epileptic than non-epileptic have a psychosis; the relationship between these two disorders remains

unknown. Only a very small percentage of patients with epilepsy develop psychoses. The links of the unqualified making psychiatric diagnoses and writing psycho-biographies and psycho-biographies continue to swell, apparently to the delight of publishers.

The political, religious and Great Russian messianic views of Dostoevsky were widely held in the literary and political circles in which he moved. Antisemitism was in fact officially encouraged. Dostoevsky's literary gifts and stature as a writer made him one of the most effective advocates of those ideas. Although he was both a Slavophile and a Slavist, he was as anti-Polish as he was antisemitic. Like other of the Russian Slavophile movement he held that the Great Russians were destined to lead and govern the other Slavic nationalities and the eventually the Russian messianic mission would engulf the West. Despite his hope of eventual Russian political and religious hegemony, he feared the rise of a socialist Anti-christ in Russia. Although he made much of the role of Jewish socialism, of which there were actually few in his day, he also accused, either directly or by implication, the socialists, French socialists and the Catholic Church of being the Anti-christ.

Far from being a paranoid delusion as Rice states, Dostoevsky's belief in the rise of a socialist Anti-christ in Russia appears to have been imbued with the mysterious and awesome quality of prophecy. How are we to view the Marxist dogmas of the historical imperative, the inevitability of a communist world-order with the melting away of government not to mention the idiocy of a dictatorship of the proletariat? Is not Marxism-Leninism a messianic doctrine? One has only to read the names of distinguished American writers who periodically endorse some leftist cause or other in full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* to realize that messianism is an on-going occupational malady of literary figures. Do the signs of peddlers, announcements and denouncements suffer from paranoia? Not at all, only from the universal vagaries of the human spirit.

Goldstein, drawing an entirely different inference, quotes from *The Possessed*, the narrator saying "Sipian Trofimovich assured me on one occasion that the greatest artists could be the worst accountants and that there was nothing incompatible between the two." It is inconceivable that Dostoevsky, who certainly considered himself a great artist, did not look into his own soul when he wrote these lines. Then as now, the novelist as political activist and advocate and the novelist as novelist wrote in two different worlds. There is only occasional seepage from the political into the literary, for which we can be eternally grateful. Who can deny that Dostoevsky despite the narrowness of many of his political, religious and nationalist views was a man of great compassion and nobility of spirit?

JOSEPH L. WHELAN
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Translating 'Beowulf'

Sir, - Jean Queval's French translation of *Beowulf* is not, as T. A. Shippey states (January 1), "the first for over a century". Walter Thomas's translation was published in 1919 by Henri Didier.

Identically, in this translation, Unferth "était assis au pied du mur de ses Scyldings".

JACQUES MOURADIAN,
10 rue de la Terrasse, 75017 Paris.

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'The Pursuit of Signs'

Sir, - As an undergraduate reading English at a university town, as the media would have it, by the effects of "elite fashions" in theoretical criticism, I was surprised to read John Bayley's review of Jonathan Culler's *The Pursuit of Signs* (January 1).

Forgetting for a moment the Englishman's innate distrust of the "latest contraptions" of his fellows in any field, we ought at least to try to ensure that his scepticism is not rooted in basic errors of aerodynamics. These might take the form of confusing semantics with the larger scope of the post-Structuralist enterprise; of fearing the "dominion of terminology" without (except in the case of *folie et stupeur*) seeming to appreciate its potential for the elucidation as well as the mystification of an area fraught with preconceptions if not with misconceptions; and, worst, of acquiescing in the panacea of "the interpretive process" as though that were an established feature of all living surfaces. John Bayley suggests that it is and always will be but do we know what constitutes our interpretations of texts, if ours they be? Are those interpretations not themselves subject to analysis, and if so, do we not then move into a more searching realm of criticism? We may continue to "interpret" at any stage in the discourse, it is true, but one of the functions of the semiotic "discipline" is to afford us access to a better understanding of hermeneutics as conceived to its widest sense.

"Normal subjective methods" were made to work so long as we cared to pluck our efforts at such a level - that of short hops down a valley-slope. We can continue to read the movement of "Spleen" as a "common phenomenon in human nature" or the "Ode to a Grecian Urn" as a recognition of "the man-to-man relationship with a poet in his poetry" only so long as our patience and confidence in these grand assertions hold out. But as soon as the spirit of textuality awakens us to the complex-

ities underlying our own formulations about literature, we will want to experiment with elementary aerobatics - to focus better on the problems of reading well.

Without wishing to be drawn into a defence of recent poetics, which no doubt can be allied with "conventional practices" by those who understand both, I would say that the awakening of our critical capabilities, and sensibilities, to new modes of reading will "destroy our sense of the truth in fiction" if that truth is the gift "real human nature" of *The Wind in the Willows*. If fiction must defer to truth, then we must know more about the composition of this truth. We should be as persistent and circumspect as Johnson was in accounting for the ragged, overlapping interface of *art* and *life* in our conduct of criticism too lazily, our flying machine will grow too full of holes, and we will forget how carefully it was designed from the wreck of its predecessor.

RICHARD YARLOTT,
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Military Drinking

Sir, - Oswyn Murray (Letters, December 25) asks if there is any close connection between drinking rituals and styles of warfare, and whether different regiments have different mess customs corresponding to their functions in war.

I am afraid that the answer is in the negative. Different armies and different regiments within them certainly have different drinking rituals and habits, and Oswyn Murray's explanation, in the second paragraph of his letter, of the link between soldiering and drinking is valid. But differences in drinking habits and rituals are linked, not to differences in military function, but to social origin. Expensive regiments have expensive drinking habits, linked to the drinking habits of the social group from which they are drawn. The habits and rituals of Scottish, Irish, Welsh, English, French, German,

Americans, Russian and other soldiers derive from their racial and social links.

Some rituals are based on historical tradition, notably that of certain regiments accustomed to entertain royalty in the eighteenth century. Their royal guests were known to succumb to regimental hospitality before their hosts, and it was considered tactful not to expect officers to rise to drink the loyal toast (the Navy do not do so, on the grounds of insufficient head room, a convenient excuse for those unable to remain upright in a slight swell).

There is even one cavalry regiment, of which the officers continue to converse in a lively manner while the toast is drunk and the national anthem played. I once had the experience of accompanying a distinguished French general to lunch with this regiment. In spite of my previous "briefing", he could not bring himself to observe the regiment's custom, particularly as they had all stood rigidly to attention in silence for the toast of "Monseigneur le Président" and the strains of the Marseillaise.

Of all the strange and impractical military drinking rituals, I hand the palm to that of Walter Scott's nine-and-twenty squires of Branksome Hall:

They carved at the meat with gloves of steel,
and they drank the red wine through the helmet barred.

'Not a ritual I should like to attempt in my expansive mess kit!'
MICHAEL CARVER,
House of Lords.

Pangrams

Sir, - David Hunter (Letters, November 27) offers English pangrams of thirty and thirty-one letters. But shorter examples exist. Edward F. Moore, in the *IEEE Transactions on Information Theory* (Volume 26, No 5, September 1980, page 609) gives three examples of just twenty-six letters that he, C. E. Shannon

and H. O. Pollak had found some years ago. The best of them is: "Squidgy fez, blank jimp crwth vox". This example had been quoted earlier by Martin Gardner (*Sixth Book of Mathematical Games from Scientific American*, W. H. Freeman, San Francisco, no date, page 149) who explains that "the sentence is spoken by a man of the Near East to his short, squat fez as he pulls it down over his ears to blank out the thin delicate voice (notes) of a crwth being played nearby".

Professor Moore also gives an example of a sentence which uses each sound of the English language (with American pronunciation) exactly once:

"Hum, thou whirling fusion, yes, Joy, pay cash show; vic, thaw two wool dock bags".
N. J. A. SLOANE,
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Sir, - I note a frequent misattribution of the following familiar palindromes: "T. Elot, top bard, notes putrid tank emanating, is sad. Pd assign it a madon." "Gnat dirt upset on drab pot toilet".

This exercise was written in 1960 by Alastair Reid, the Scots poet and translator. In several book collections it has been mistakenly attributed to W. H. Auden, who heard it from Reid and was so amused that he often quoted it to his friends.

WILLARD R. ESPY,
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S. J. Perelman

Sir, - Philip French notes (December 25) that S. J. Perelman uses a word that the editors of the *Oxford English Dictionary* appear unac-

quainted with - "supercsles", used insubstantially with reference to the sex-life of Lady Ottoline Morrell...

It would be surprising to find the word in any dictionary. It is an ad-man's neologism applied to percsles sheets and thus not so inscrutable after all. Perelman was in the habit of adapting and mocking all sorts of pretentious jargon. No doubt he was genuinely taken with obscure terms, but he was usually making fun of the usage of others at least some of the time.

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Books in Science

Sir, - Redmond O'Hanlon in his admirable notice of the British Library's "Famous Books in Science" exhibition (Commentary, December 18) made a natural slip in describing Vesalius's muscle-man "lurching towards us out of an unbordered Swiss landscape", since the book was printed at Basel. But Harvey Cushing recorded in his magisterial bibliography that the consecutive landscape behind the series of muscle-men was identified, fifty years ago now, as Abano Terme, "a fashionable watering-place south-west of Padua", where the book was written. Cushing imagined "Jan van Calcar, Vesalius's artist, on a free afternoon sketching the landscape panorama, which he subsequently cut up as a background for the muscle figures".

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We regret that in the notice of Peter Padfield's *Rule Britannia* (November 20) the name of the author was misstip.

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In a shared tradition

By Richard Brown

MARY T. REYNOLDS:
Joyce and Dante
The Shaping Imagination
375pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £16.10.
0 691 06446 6

HERMIONE DE ALMEIDA:
Byron and Joyce through Homer
Don Juan and Ulysses
233pp. Macmillan. £15.
0 333 30172 6

In *Joyce and Dante* Mary Reynolds sets out to show that the works of Dante are a strong presence in Joyce's writing, third only to the unmistakable presences of Shakespeare and Homer. She argues that the relationship of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom is based on that of Dante and Virgil in the *Divine Comedy* as much as on that of Telemachus and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, which has served for previous critics, Brecht to Latin, when Dr Reynolds identifies as a false father-figure and representative of a sinistral clergy in the *Ulysses*, is supposed to be behind Joyce's characters Wells, the mundane trawler priest in *Stephen Hero*, and Father Conmee, the comfortable worldly priest of "Wandering Rocks". Stephen's "epiphanies" visions in *A Portrait of the Artist* mirror Dante's eulogy of Beatrice in the *Vim* *Movra*, and the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses* is full of allusions to Francesca and Paolo, the famous doomed lovers of *the Inferno*. Both writers, it is said, have a fascination with water, and place artists in the centre of their work. Joyce, Dr Reynolds believes, built structural parallels into his work, as she demonstrates in an elaborate internal scheme for the *Dubliners* stories, and Joyce's writing even contains prosodic echoes of *terza rima*.

As one would expect, her book is most convincing when it examines those places in Joyce's texts where Dante is evidently the determining presence. There is a passage in *Stephen Hero*, for instance, where the composition of a Danteque inferno which he might populate with his acquaintances. In the "Aeolus" episode of *Ulysses* there is a difficult section headed "Rhymes and Reasons" where Stephen puzzles over Dante's verse. And Joyce, according to his Trieste pupil, Oscar Schwartz, kept Dante's lines on Helen of Troy on his desk beneath a photograph of an ugly old woman, and delighted in an irreverent calculation of Helen's probable age when Dante met her in the *Inferno*.

These immediately apparent items may have been sufficient to satisfy an earlier period of Joyce criticism but they are not enough for as arduous and experienced a Joycean scholar as Dr Reynolds. She brings into play the now formidable array of sophisticated Joycean technology. She appends a 100-page list of all discernible allusions to Dante. She treats the complete scholarly Joyce oeuvre, the poems and the drama, the book reviews and the lectures, the letters, early drafts and notebooks as well as the major works. She has researched in detail the history of Joyce's reading of Dante, from unearthing his college curriculum to acquiring the actual copies of Dante's works which he possessed in Trieste. She is moreover one of the first Joyceans to have brought out an interpretative rather than a textual study which uses the recently published *Archives* reproduction of Joyce's manuscripts, and thus she is able to trace allusions and also to study when and how they were incorporated into, or in some cases omitted from, the final text. The book is, however, neither strictly a source study nor quite a critical comparison, but a characteristically Joycean attempt to identify and classify all the relevant allusions, or intertextualities, as recent theorists describe them, of the *Ulysses* and make it a *Portrait of the Artist* in *Ulysses* and *Stephen Hero*.

Joyce, or the many other allusion-tracing books that Joyce's writing has inspired.

Dr Reynolds's almost obsessive desire to be exhaustive and precise has the unfortunate effect of tipping the interpretative balance in favour of inclusiveness. The "inconstant series of concentric circles of varying gradations of light" made by the Blooms' lampshade on the ceiling in "Ithaca", to take one small example, seems in no real sense to depend upon Dantean cosmology so much as on this consistently analytic and universalizing language of the episode. Dr Reynolds's heavy reliance on "suppressed", "distorted" and "deliberately inexact" reminiscences may prompt the sceptical reader to enquire whether anywhere in Joyce's writing there may be said to be absolutely no Dante at all. To ask such a question would be to threaten the charmed circle of correspondences in which the impressively constructed edifice of this book rests. Dante was indeed important to Joyce and we may now be assured that the fullest extent of that importance has been comprehensively charted.

There can have been few important authors to whom Joyce has not been compared or to whom he has not been considered to allude - even if we leave out of the reckoning all those subsequent authors whose least spark of verbal ingenuity has instantly

been dubbed Joycean. There is sanction enough for this analogic practice in Joyce's writing itself, but as a favoured critical mode it seems to have started in those highly significant years after the publication of *Ulysses* in Paris in 1922 but before the book was legally available in England or America. Stuart Gilbert's book-length defence, published in 1930, set the tone for later critics. He insisted on the Homeric analogy and thereby enabled the scandalous and revolutionary Joyce to be accepted, in the words of the defence counsel at the 1933 trial in America, as "an austere Olympian". Since then readers of Joyce have hoped for much from analogic studies (*Joyce and the Bible*, *Joyce and Ibsen* and *Joyce and Shakespeare* are three of the most successful), perhaps for more than they can ultimately give. In many cases such studies have been intended to cope with the enormous difficulties of Joyce's texts by pitching them in the apparently sturdier ground of another writer's work. Comparative study has been, for many critics, a way - as Eliot said of Joyce's Homeric scheme - of "giving a shape and a significance to the immense panoramas of fullness and anarchy" which they have found in the later Joyce. Even the intrepid Adeline Glasheen has been tempted into the rather unsatisfactory suggestion (she herself calls it "eccentric") that "Finnegans

Wake is all about Shakespeare". Mary Reynolds says that she is "mindful that Dante alone is not the key to Joyce" but her book does not leave her readers quite mindful enough.

The potential claustrophobia of interpreting Joyce through some single other author may seem to have been recognized: a short while ago we had *Joyce between Freud and Jung*, and now there appears *Byron and Joyce through Homer*. Hermione de Almeida is, however, not strictly a Joycean at all so much as a broad humanist literary critic. Her book is written with considerable verve (the very first word is "Played"); she has a healthy disrespect for scholarly pigeon-holing and the dissection of textual minutiae; and she pursues a rollicking, garrulous and commonsensical, though still intelligent and informed, argument. Her central contention is that Byron and Joyce share a fundamentally similar response to Homer and that *Don Juan* and *Ulysses* provide for a later age what Homer's epic gave to his contemporaries in Greece. Byron and Joyce appear as the twin representatives of a rationalist nineteenth-century admiration for "Homer and his unchristian heart". They are held to share an equivocal attitude, part reverence, part irreverence, to their source - "if Homer is touchstone he is also punching-bag" as the author

colourfully puts it. She skims over the details of classical reference in both authors and takes some licence in her interpretative sweep; but she is able to convey the courage and élan that are part of the appeal of both modern transformations of the epic.

Tradition is one of the key terms of her argument and she traces the development of reductive mock-epic from Petronius to Pope by way of background to these later achievements. Morality, another familiar concern of liberal literary criticism, is important to her too; and she sketches out the positive statements of two authors whose work has always been difficult to pin down in moral terms. Byron and Joyce, she argues, both offer modern, transvaluated versions of Homeric ideals of individual virtue (*areté*) and of social duty (*patheia*). Their choice of the *Odyssey* as primary model is significant in that they build on Odysseus' virtues of curiosity and circumspection rather than on the millitaristic ideals of the *Iliad*.

Little of Hermione de Almeida's material is new. But her book offers a courageous and emphatic attempt to refresh our orientation toward Joyce in particular, in accordance with her enthusiastic humanist perspective - an attempt that will be warmly welcomed.

Ruling the field full of folk

By Paula Neuss

ANNA P. BALDWIN:
The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman
107pp. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer. £15.
0 85991 073 3

Anna Baldwin aims to set Langland's discussions of government in their fourteenth-century context. She believes that historians have too often used the poem to illustrate their own views of medieval history, but "if history is put to the service of the poem, it becomes clear how very much an awareness of the historical and political context can elucidate Langland's lines".

There are certainly a good many that require elucidation. Readers of *Piers Plowman* are apt to be puzzled by the episode relating the marriage of Lady Mede: the Dreamer seems to get more than he bargained for when he asks to see Falsehood. Dr Baldwin thinks that "Lady Mede represents a serious late medieval

problem", i.e. the corrupt power of the nobility, which could only be solved by the king's asserting absolute authority in the way that Richard II's government attempted. Langland apparently expresses his support for Richard's behaviour through his portrayal of the king in the Lady Mede episode, but then seems to take a different tack. Dr Baldwin asks, "How can the absolute ideal of monarchy embodied in the *Vizio King* be made compatible with the more merciful, even democratic ideal practised by Piers, Conscience and Christ?"

The answer is not simple. Nothing to do with Langland over is, though one of the points the poet does seem to make clearly, is that then can spend a good part of their lives asking the wrong questions and coming up with the wrong answers. Dr Baldwin sees Piers, Conscience and Christ as rulers, analogous to the *Vizio King*, and as continuing a discussion about government begun in the Lady Mede section. "Langland relates the social world, where the *Vizio King* or Piers tries to govern, with the whole created Universe where Christ is king, and the world of the mind, where Conscience tries

to rule". She finds Piers submissive, Christ merciful and Conscience lacking in authority at the end of the poem, but concludes that Langland's ideas are not inconsistent, that they simply change. In fact these figures are not usually seen as equivalents; they take different roles in different planes of allegory, and it does not seem right to suggest that they "provide structural links between different sections of the poem" - that is done by the Dreamer, who travels between these various worlds.

Anna Baldwin's citations from medieval political writings and historical comment on monarchical marriages, for example, and do highlight parts of *Piers Plowman*. But it should not

be treated as just a political tract. Only parts of the poem are relevant to her thesis - those that may contain topical material, such as (besides the Lady Mede episode) the fable of the rats and the cat, scenes with Conscience and (oddy) Christ's dual with the devil. Of course it would be a strange account of the poem that left that, the climax, out, but it is disappointing to find the section "into which" Dr Baldwin admits, "Langland poured most meaning and poetry" analysed merely for its legal language. And much of the poem is unaccounted for in her book: the Dreamer is missing altogether, and with him any recognition that the poem is a dream-vision resistant to logical analysis.

Scant consolation

By Valerie Adams

F. ANNE PAYNE:
Chaucer and Menippean Satire
290pp. University of Wisconsin Press. £13.50.
299 08170 2

F. Anne Payne sees as predominant in Chaucer's work a particular form of mind, characteristic also of Lucian's satire: the intellectual freedom conferred by the realization that all ideals are unattainable, all theories faulty. She examines in detail three "Menippean" works - *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale* and the *Knights' Tale*. These are all indebted in some way to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, the link between Lucian and Chaucer.

Agreeing with Northrop Frye's view that the *Consolation* owes its popularity to the fact that it is a Menippean satire, or anatomy, she argues that Lady Philosophy moves inconsequently from one set of ideals to another in the course of her demonstration that the mind must be kept free. This reading is not very persuasive, and neither is the comparison with Lucian. It seems more likely that the *Consolation*'s popularity in the Middle Ages was due in part to its presentation of a mind in conflict, struggling to grasp the nature of truth. The cosmic flight of the Boethian soul in search of harmony is far removed from the irreverent, jaunt to the heavens in Lucian's *Caronemipia*.

Payne is interested in Chaucerian man's confusion as he tries and fails

to understand his world, and she suggests that Chaucer's main debt to Boethius was his "Menippean vision". Her accounts of the ideas behind Chaucer's philosophical allusions are sometimes questionable. In the *Knights' Tale* she sees an opposition between "love's law", or "natural law", and "positive law", and misses Chaucer's irony at the expense of the character who sets himself up as the champion of "love's law" without understanding its significance. In the *Nun's Priest's Tale* she sees mockery of two different philosophical views (those of "the hooly doctour Augustyn" or Boece, or the Bishop Bradwardyn"), but this seems over-ingenious. The reader of this *Tale* does need to know something about contemporary debates on free will and divine foreknowledge in order to enjoy to the full the question of whose plot - God's or the fox's - Chaucer is setting out, but Chaucer is not a systematic philosopher.

The discussion of Chaucer in the context of Lucian is in the end irritating: Chaucer's interest is not in the clash of ideas, as such. As a Christian satirist, however elusive, his concern is with their moral implications.

Volume XXIX of the series *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Thought* is a new edition of Sebastian Castellio's *De Arte Dubitandi et Confidendi* (Ignorandi et Sciendi) by Elisabeth F. F. F. (1919-1964). E. J. Brill, 68 guilders, 90 f. 06344 7. This edition prepared from the manuscript in the Cambridge Bibliothek, Rotterdam, includes several chapters omitted from the 1932 edition.

On and off the wagon

By Rosemary Ashton

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH:
Benjamin the Waggoner
Edited by Paul F. Betz
356pp. Brighton: Harvester. £40.
0 85327 513 8

The editor of this minor Wordsworth poem, better known under its published title, "The Waggoner", believes it has hitherto unrecognized claims on our critical attention. It is, he reminds us, Wordsworth's "most extended effort" in the mock-heroic vein. This fact might be rather a discouragement than an incentive, since Wordsworth is notoriously least secure when being humorous, and in any case seldom aims primarily at humour.

Wordsworth's own comments, quoted in Paul F. Betz's introduction, are hardly encouraging either. From 1812 he compared the poem unfavourably with "Peter Bell", with which it has affinities. Both mock-heroic poems were published in 1819, and both caused sniggers and parodies in the periodicals. Wordsworth himself preferred the "higher tone of imagination" of "Peter Bell", dismissing "The Waggoner" as "fanciful" though written "con amore". Yet Lamb, to whom it was dedicated, praised the "spirit of beautiful tolerance" in the poem, and caught the intended spirit of fun.

What this admirably researched and presented edition highlights are the peculiar qualities and problems presented by Wordsworth's shorter narratives. Betz gives us a detailed history of this much rewritten poem, the full text of the 1806 manuscript, "Benjamin the Waggoner", and on facing pages the first published version of "The Waggoner" of 1819.

Expanding egos

By Jean Wilson

ARNOLD WEINSTEIN:
Fictions of the Self 1550-1800
302pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £12.30 (paperback, £5.05).
0 691 06448 2

Moving with grace through three centuries and four languages, Arnold Weinstein traces the developing interplay between the self and the world as it is reflected in the works with which he deals. He argues that in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century novels (*Lazarillo de Tormes*, *La Vida del Buscón*, *Simplicissimus*, *La Princesse de Clèves*) no separation is made between the personality's existence as psychic self and as physical body. This is succeeded by a period in which there is the possibility of individual-personal development, in which the power of the self can triumph over a hostile environment, and the world is forced to endorse the protagonist's own image of his or her self (*Moll Flanders*, *La Vie de Marianne*, *Joseph Andrews*).

But this optimism is brief, and the next group of novels Professor Weinstein examines (*Manon Lescaut*, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers*, *Clarissa*, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*) portrays a conflict between the self and the expectations and limitations imposed on it by external forces. The characters in these novels put psychological fulfilment (as opposed to physical or social) in the earlier novels) as their paramount aim, and are destroyed in their quest by a world which has other priorities than individual development. Finally, Weinstein looks at a group of books (*Le Neveu Rameau*, *Tristram Shandy*, *Rousseau's Confessions*) which celebrate "the freedoms of language and imagination over and against the poverty of matter and experience".

Parallel with this developing view of the self, and as Weinstein shows, an essential aspect of it, is the value placed upon, and the attitude to, language as a means of self-expression. The early protagonists use language as a tool for survival, as they use other resources such as their bodies and the weaknesses of those around them. Moll Flanders and Marianne "achieve selfhood largely through confession, but their rewards and other appetites are at play in these texts". In the later texts Warther and Des Grieux yearn for complete relationships, and language is not in itself sufficient for them; Clarissa does find language sufficient as a means of self-expression, but she dies in the process. Only in the last group of works can language become in itself a means of transcending external circumstance.

Weinstein writes well (except in his introduction, which is full of trendy jargon-breakers, a characteristic totally absent in the lucid main text); he has an ability to encapsulate a character or a characteristic in a neat phrase - Marianne is "a moral porcupine" in *Tristram Shandy* the "hobby-horse" replaces the "horse". He does not mind words about his subjects: *La Vida del Buscón* is a "filthy book". His obvious authority for the works he likes, and his humane range of knowledge, make this book a delight to read, and the implicit recognition of the European nature of culture in the period with which he deals is a reproach to more chauvinist and limited scholars.

To lament that Professor Weinstein does not deal with other books in so long and comprehensive a work is perhaps a demand for more of the same (I wish he had included Nabokov's *The Invincible Traveller*), rather than a criticism of a limitation; but I think his argument would have been strengthened by a wider range of reference. So good a writer should not use "elementary" when he means "elementary". And it is disappointing that Princeton University Press is following OUP in putting texts in the original language in the text; a book so conscious of European culture should be the last place to adopt this practice.

The Grand Survey, the careful marshalling and classification of as many plays as possible, seems to have become the dominant approach to critical discussion of the drama of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a tidy method, but seldom exciting or revelatory. Laura Brown's *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760* is fiercer than most; a place for everything, and everything in its place.

At last this longed-for day of June, This long, long day is going out; The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune, That busy, busy Bird Is all that can be heard In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon.

Yet there are odd Wordsworthian flashes of imaginative observation, as in the description of Benjamin on the morning after the revel (omitted, unfortunately, from all the published versions):

And some sober thoughts arise To meet the wandering from his eyes. Elements of the "egotistical sublime" exist, too, mixing strangely with the mock-heroic. Wordsworth clearly sensed this, for he omitted from all published versions a lyrical passage commemorating a rock on which the Wordsworths, Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson had carved their names. But he retained the Epilogue, in which the poet intrusively tells of the loss to him of Benjamin and his wagon. Here personal sentiment reigns to the exclusion of humour:

Yes I, and all about me here, Through all the changes of the year, Had seen him through the mountains go, To pomp of mist or pomp of snow.

In short, "Benjamin the Waggoner" is a good example of the pros and cons of "Wordsworthianism": gentle humour which sometimes works, but not always; personal intrusions which usually do not succeed; natural and human descriptions of varying quality; and a fine sense of comic catastrophe somewhat detracted from by ill-matched lyricism. Scholars will be grateful for this volume, which will help them assess Wordsworth's habits of composition. Less dedicated readers will be indifferent to its revelations and probably also to the poem, which, after all, remains one of Wordsworth's lesser achievements.

There is another point. Most authors can be loosely grouped under the heading realist (Pope, Johnson, Jane Austen, Trollope) or dreamer (Shelley, Keats, Yeats, Lawrence). But Dickens is a rare case of an author who was both in an extreme degree, so that he can describe a London street with more exact detail than Balzac would have given, and at the same time effortlessly endow it with a visionary quality. Now Dickens's religious passages, except when satirical about people like Mrs Pardiggle and Mrs Clemens, invariably show him as the dreamer. This must suggest the suspicion that for him God was not indisputably there. Not only

Sentiments of good

By A. O. J. Cockshut

DENNIS WALDER:
Dickens and Religion
232pp. George Allen and Unwin. £12.50.
0 04 80006 X

The literary weakness of Dickens's overtly religious passages has been a commonplace almost since he began to write. As early as 1842, the *Christian Remembrancer*, a High Church organ, was briskly dismissing the sentimentalism of the death of Little Nell. Those who disagreed, like Joffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, were usually those who actively preferred sentiment to religion.

There have been three general explanations. Some have said that since Dickens's own religious system (or perhaps more correctly sentiment) was muddled, thin and unconvincing, it is natural that it should have issued in weak writing. Others have maintained that Dickens did not deeply believe in the system he professed and promulgated, that he spent his time either deceiving himself or deceiving others, and that this failure of sincerity issued in weak, over-emphatic writing, and in a general failure of the sense of reality. The third view, argued recently with persuasive eloquence by John Carey, is that Dickens was imaginatively bound to the things his judgement and conscience disapproved, and thus always tended to write badly about the things he admired. (And this tendency is by no means confined to the religious sphere. No one doubts that there is in the world such a thing as maternal love, or that Dickens approved of it, yet he always wrote weakly about it.) It will be observed that to adopt any one of these explanations does not preclude the adoption of either or both of the others. Indeed, I would maintain myself that all three are in some measure true.

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He tells us with obvious approval that Dickens believed that human nature was naturally good. In part, no doubt, this was a healthy reaction against the monstrous doctrines of total depravity and reprobation, which figure (I should say) far more prominently in Dickens's unfavourable religious portraits than they did in Victorian society generally. But Walder then omits to notice that Dickens in practice was very far from thinking people naturally good. Was Quilp naturally good, or Miss Medbourne, or Uriah Heep, or Miss Clammar, or Compeyson or Silas Wegg? Perhaps there is a connection between thinking people naturally good in theory, and thinking most of them unconscionable villains in practice. An optimistic view of human nature leaves the sinner without excuse. Would anyone be willing to deny that Trollope, who did not think human nature naturally good, is a more charitable judge than Dickens?

This leads on to the only general weakness in Walder's book. While he is a capable expositor of religious ideas and feelings, he is not equally strong at penetrating their literary consequences. His bent is perhaps more towards the history of ideas than literary criticism proper. He tends to give us Dickens's religious ideas in the raw, before they had been hewed in that awe-inspiring, flawed and wonderful crucible of his imagination.

It is sometimes said that Dickens failed because the nineteenth century was an age of religious uncertainty. It was; but the explanation will not serve. The great Victorians in general were unlike Dickens in that they could write well about religion, and not only those for whom God was indisputably there. Not only

and Dryden; any less schismatic kind of play is forced into weirdly contrived readings: Elzevire's, *She Would If She Could* becomes "a formal dispute against female liberation"; whose male rake ("the out relief") provides "testament" and guarantee of his chastity? "When the hero of the same writer's *Maid of Mode* greets a male friend with a Frenchified salute, Ms Brown describes this dally as 'his morning embrace' and characterizes the Orange Woman's actual comitatus as 'open disgust at... sexual corruption'. Any play dealt with comes to depend on an unambiguous system of moral or social values; any such system is described in the terms of a crude and unargued historicism. The tenor of the writing is often intelligent; but much too much is sacrificed to a cramping impulse for "shape" and "direction".

Newman and Hopkins but George Eliot, Trollope, Hardy and Pater all wrote eloquently on the subject. Why not Dickens?

Now we come to a contrary critical movement, to which Dennis Walder's very useful, well-written and well-researched book belongs. It denies our major; it says that the tradition that Dickens was weak in this way is false. This movement first came to my attention when the late lamented Dr Leavis sternly rebuked me for failing to perceive a profound religious message in the passages describing the Alps in *Little Dorrit*, and with his usual admirable boldness compared Dickens in Blake as a great visionary religious writer. But like Joffrey of the *Edinburgh Review*, were usually those who actively preferred sentiment to religion.

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Atop the camel

By Edward Burns

LAURA BROWN:
English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760
An Essay in Generic History
240pp. Yale University Press. £12.30.
0 300 02585 8

The Grand Survey, the careful marshalling and classification of as many plays as possible, seems to have become the dominant approach to critical discussion of the drama of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is a tidy method, but seldom exciting or revelatory. Laura Brown's *English Dramatic Form, 1660-1760* is fiercer than most; a place for everything, and everything in its place.

Digging in along the Danube

By J. J. Wilkes

A. LENGVEL and G. T. B. RADAN
(Editors)

The Archaeology of Roman Pannonia
500pp. Lexington: University Press
of Kentucky / Budapest: Akadémiai
Kiadó. \$45.
0 8131 1370 9

Although the title specifies Roman Pannonia, the 500 pages of text and 167 pages of illustrations describe the history and archaeology of what is now the west half of Hungary from paleolithic to medieval times. The province of the Roman Empire encompassed the largest between Vienna and Belgrade, defined on the north and east by the great bend of the river Danube above Budapest. For the Magyars, looking towards the Roman Empire from the outside, this former Roman territory is still today called Transdanubia.

The prehistory is described by Otto Trogmayer. Inevitably we are introduced to the bewildering catalogue of "cultures" and "groups" to which are assigned names either of the site where one was first clearly identified or of some physical characteristic apparently of diagnostic significance. The material evidence from prehistoric times is compared with that from other lands, plentiful and was studied in that classic of archaeological scholarship, V. Gordon Childe's *The Danube in Prehistory* (1929). Notions of innovation through the movement of new peoples into the area which that work enshrined are now disputed, though they still abound in the work under review. Yet even in a chapter which surveys and cites only the most recent publications it is still extraordinary that neither Childe nor his work is referred to (though it is noted in the introduction).

A survey of Pannonian archaeology by Agnes Salamon and Agnes Cs. 506) from the end of the Roman period in the fifth century to the arrival of the Magyars in the tenth presents a different problem. Here the task is to order and match the material remains (which consist almost entirely of burials) to those known peoples who successively moved into and out of the area during those five centuries: Huns, Ostrogoths, Longobards, Avars, Franks and Slavs. Some indication of the problem here is to be gained from an Appendix by Imre Lengyel describing the results obtained from laboratory analysis of blood types in skeletons of this period. This results from "Longobardic" cemeteries reveal a disturbing lack of homogeneity and seem to indicate that the bulk of persons interred were of local origin. Moreover it appears that remains in these and other cemeteries "naturally" represent a continuously resident aboriginal population which can be followed in our material from the sixth to the thirteenth centuries despite the diverse ethnic elements that were swept hither by the storms of history.

The Roman remains are described in seventeen chapters contributed by seven Hungarian scholars still very active in their fields: Ferenc Sipos (History of Research), Sándor Soproni (Geography), Róza Roman (Frontiers), László Barkóczi (History of the Roman Province), János Fitz (Administration and the Army), Populatio, Way of Life, Economic Life), Edit B. Thomas (Religion, Villas, Arts and Crafts, Glassware, Amateurs), Klára Péczy (Cities), Katalin Bródy-Szörényi (Eyes B. Bónis (Pottery). As one would expect from such authors it is all sound stuff and some of it is really quite interesting. It is all the more a pity that such an excellent production is marred by the poor quality of the illustrations which abound in mis-spelling and confusing misprints of names and technical terms (and this applies not least to the photo captions, see plate CXXIX).

Moreover, in spite of the plea on the cover that this is the duty of the archaeologist, the book, taken together in a single volume, has the same limitations of these severe scholars.

evidently produced independently and at different times, do not present the reader with such repetition and overlap as cause both tedium and embarrassment. As an attempt to provide an ordered introduction to the material remains from a historically documented era it has many shortcomings. The provision of maps and site plans is throughout wholly inadequate and among the illustrations the same objects appear in some cases three times, viewed from different directions. The rich and varied stone sculpture and epigraphy of Roman Hungary is hardly represented at all.

Throughout its history Pannonia was a frontier province, and a particularly exposed one at that. By around the end of the first century no a Roman army of four legions, which together with auxiliary forces totalled around 40,000 full-time professional soldiers, was deployed near the Danube. There grew up near the Danube large civil communities at places where modern towns now exist: both Vienna and Budapest have their origins in the combination of legionary fortresses and the nearby civil town. Before that happened, in the century following the Roman conquest under Augustus, what was Roman Pannonia came with soldiers and settlers from outside. Modern Ljubljana began as a colony of discharged legionary veterans, settled around AD 14 after the legion based there had been re-occupied to the Danube, where it occupied a new base at Carnuntum. Both Emona (the Roman Ljubljana) and Carnuntum lay on that ancient route between the Adriatic and the Baltic along which amber had been conveyed to the Mediterranean as early as the Bronze Age. Other veteran colonies were placed along the route that passed from northern Italy down the Save valley to Belgrade and the Balkans. From its first conquest under Augustus this overland route between the east and west halves of the Empire was of great strategic importance. In the late Empire it was the axis along which the civil war between imperial rivals more often than not took place. When it was finally severed at the end of the fourth century, it never again proved possible to unite the Empire.

Romanization, a crude label for a transformation which saw the conquered barbarian turn into a councillor, toga-clad and Latin-speaking; of a Roman provincial city, was much advanced under Hadrian, that tireless imperial inspector of provinces and armies. Several communities in the interior were incorporated as Roman cities (*Municipia*) and the same order was applied to the hitherto largely unregulated frontier towns near the military bases. At the same time the widespread adoption of techniques introduced first by the Romans and Latin inscriptions on native traditions reveal the persistence of native traditions in burial rite, dress and ornament, and personal names. It is a pity that the illustrations of the present volume do not include one of the superb late first-century tombstones of the Brunnvi. In north-east Pannonia, described in the text. In a panel below the portraits of the deceased is depicted the journey to the world beyond in a two- or four-wheeled coach. There is a coachman, a driver, a bench sits a servant and the whole procession is conducted by a leader. A this, and much else, was profoundly affected by events in the late second century which were to bring Pannonia and its army to the centre of imperial affairs.

In the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161) a leading Greek orator delivered fulsome tribute to Rome and her Empire. The preserved text has since enticed many to portray that Antonic era as the glorious high summer of the Roman Empire. It praises the emperors for their protection of civilized Greece and Rome, a benign embrace in which all could flourish in peace and prosperity and from destructive wars within and without. From enemies outside by rings of armies and frontiers. No one even remembered what a war was like and one had to make a long journey in

any direction to gain a sight of the emperor's armies. It is perhaps tempting to imagine that some of those outside the Empire may have heard of the speech by Aelius Aristides and thought about a move to this paradise from their bleak homelands. Under Pius' successor Marcus Aurelius some of the Germans beyond the Danube asked if they could enter and, when this was refused, entered none the less, sweeping aside the frontier army of Pannonia and penetrating to northern Italy.

In the century and a half which had elapsed since they had fought the legions of Caesar and Augustus the Germans along the Rhine and Danube had got used to the ways of Rome: some of their rulers were Roman appointees, native princes brought up in the Empire. Goods were exchanged and for some there was even the opportunity for service in the Roman army, by then recruited almost entirely from the frontier districts. After a decade of fighting the Germans were forced back to their homelands in what is now Czechoslovakia and some sort of order was restored along the Roman frontier. The victories of the Pannonian army, and those of other Danube armies, were depicted in the spiral frieze around a column still to be seen in Rome (the Column of Marcus Aurelius in the Piazza della Colonna).

Barely a decade later, those same legions marched from Pannonia to Rome to bring the Empire for their general, Septimius Severus. Their barbarian appearance and uncouth

speech terrified the inhabitants of the capital. Even worse, the new emperor promptly dismissed the Italian praetorian guard and replaced it with men from the Danube legions: thirty years later pitched battles between them and the townspeople were still occurring. Severus' victory brought Pannonia, or rather its army and dependent communities, a period of material well-being which lasted more or less until the military disasters of the third century AD. Inscriptions record the erection and embellishment of many buildings and other amenities; and there are many expressions of loyalty to the Severan emperors, reflecting the special relationship of the Pannonians with the dynasty.

In the transformation of the ruling hierarchy brought about by the near disintegration of the Empire in the third century, most of the "soldier emperors" who led the recovery rose through the ranks from humble origins in Pannonia or neighbouring Moesia Superior. Most of these were tough soldiers and conscientious administrators and, later on, pious Christians. It may be suggested that their rule, so utterly different from that of the cultivated ruling class of the early Empire, paid more attention to the condition of the humble classes where their origins lay. This "Pannonian identity" is best seen in the rule of Valentinian I (364-375). A Pannonian army officer elected Augustus at the age of forty-three, an earnest Christian, he worked hard for the well-being of the Empire. The son of an illiterate peasant, he had a violent temper and a brutal

nature. Above all, records a historian, "he hated the well-dressed and educated, the wealthy and well-born".

In producing this digest of much recent study of this important province of the Roman Empire, mostly published only in Hungarian or not yet published at all, the editors and publishers have done well. Though in quality and level of scholarship it cannot stand comparison with Andras Mócsy's *Pannonia and Upper Moesia* (1974), this new collection supplements that masterly synthesis on many points. It is, however, to be regretted that in their introduction to the volume (which has too many misprints and simple errors of fact) the editors proclaim in a jarring manner the great value of their archaeological evidence is set in its proper place over and against the "historical and analytical" approach adopted by such scholars as Mócsy. This sort of notion is foolish nonsense and does no credit to the achievement of Hungarian scholars, using both literary and material evidence, who have increased our knowledge of Roman Pannonia, in all its aspects, since the Second World War. Happily, the reader will soon discover that these add other editorial notions are negated in most of the studies contributed to this volume. In conclusion, it must be said that this book does not justify the editors' claim that "for the student of the Roman provinces... this book is a 'conditio sine qua non'". A new, revised and corrected edition might be.

Approaching the Absolute

By Mary Beard

JOSCELYN GODWIN
Mystery Religions in the Ancient World
176pp. Thames and Hudson. £10.
0 500 11019 0

Fifty (or perhaps even twenty) years ago it was reassuringly easy to grasp the broad outlines of Roman religious life. The story ran something like this. The traditional cult of the city had once been the object of unwavering devotion from an unapologetic, yet pious, population; but by the second century BC this state religion had declined into the hands of "unbelieving academics" and "Christian missionaries" and Mysteries are seen to play their part in the "Perennial Philosophy", as attempts, each valid for its time and place, to point the way to the true goal of human existence. Christ, Mithras, Cybele, Attis, Isis, Serapis, Dionysus, Orpheus and the rest lead their adherents (ascetic or modern) down well-trodden spiritual paths and ultimately to a common co-operation of the Absolute.

Perhaps there is something of interest here. I am hardly competent to judge a work of mysticism, but, as such, this book is, I suspect, quite apt for the course. Moreover, the recurring and shifting notion of the "Perennial Philosophy", from its first appearance in sixteenth-century Italy, through Leibniz, Huxley and beyond, is certainly worth attention; as is, also, maybe, the intellectual roots to the Renaissance tradition as revealed by his earlier studies of Robert Fludd and Athanasius Kirke. Still, the "Academic" (believing or not) deserves a warning.

Leaving aside some errors of fact (Julius Caesar treated as the first Roman emperor; Plato imagined as shouting the dialogues for Socrates, who was "not a writer himself"); it is, to say the least, unsettling to find the religious history of the ancient world cast in terms of a crusade. On the one hand stand the heroes, those whose religions contain the three vital ingredients: a conception of the

provided alternative ways of constructing and comprehending "reality". It is the nature of these alternatives and their means of expression within ritual and symbolism that have formed the most interesting areas of modern research.

So, in a period when historical explanations of the Mysteries are becoming rapidly more sophisticated, the reviewer of a book entitled *Mystery Religions in the Ancient World* (actually, almost exclusively, a Roman Empire) might naturally be expected to alter the new work as precisely as possible within current debates. Here, however, that would be a meaningless operation. Joscelyn Godwin has produced a book out of history, but of theosophy. Ancient history has been rescued from the hands of "unbelieving academics" and "Christian missionaries" and Mysteries are seen to play their part in the "Perennial Philosophy", as attempts, each valid for its time and place, to point the way to the true goal of human existence. Christ, Mithras, Cybele, Attis, Isis, Serapis, Dionysus, Orpheus and the rest lead their adherents (ascetic or modern) down well-trodden spiritual paths and ultimately to a common co-operation of the Absolute.

Perhaps there is something of interest here. I am hardly competent to judge a work of mysticism, but, as such, this book is, I suspect, quite apt for the course. Moreover, the recurring and shifting notion of the "Perennial Philosophy", from its first appearance in sixteenth-century Italy, through Leibniz, Huxley and beyond, is certainly worth attention; as is, also, maybe, the intellectual roots to the Renaissance tradition as revealed by his earlier studies of Robert Fludd and Athanasius Kirke. Still, the "Academic" (believing or not) deserves a warning.

Leaving aside some errors of fact (Julius Caesar treated as the first Roman emperor; Plato imagined as shouting the dialogues for Socrates, who was "not a writer himself"); it is, to say the least, unsettling to find the religious history of the ancient world cast in terms of a crusade. On the one hand stand the heroes, those whose religions contain the three vital ingredients: a conception of the

Absolute, a Mother Goddess and hopes for an afterlife; on the other, the villains of the established churches, "solemn but unmythical", "respectable yet undemanding of personal enthusiasm or spiritual effort". It is not hard to guess the identity of these arch-enemies: Numen, the founder of Roman state religion and (unusually for this book) firmly designated "legendary"; official Christianity in the form of St Peter rejecting the Gentiles and bishops torturing Ariens; syncretism, which was "never more than a convenience" and so, after a bizarre comparison with the undiscriminating quality of modern democracy, is written off, making "no attempt at a real discerning of spirits". The heroes are equally predictable: Christ, in his ecstatic and ecstatic, Pythagoreans and Platonists, who "learned the ascetic oot through reasoning alone, but through initiation into the Mysteries"; Dionysus, whose rituals "opened the windows of the super-sensible world" - when they didn't; just teach the "facts of life"; Mithras, with some reservations - for here Godwin suspects "that the whole affair may have been an invented religion rather than a revealed one". It is an entertaining story, but hardly compatible with the ancient evidence.

Obviously concerned with contemporary relevance, Godwin is eager to emphasize comparisons with the modern world. This is also a cause for alarm. If the analogies sometimes remain just neutrally unhelpful (what does the familiar juxtaposition of Mithras and Greenanous actually tell us?), they are occasionally positively misleading. Vespaian's stay in the temple of Isis is simply not comparable to "General Eisenhower making a retreat with the devotees of Krishna"; and the suggestion that modern transsexuals are in fact reincarnations of the self-castrated followers of Cybele and Attis (even allowing the possibility) indicates an extraordinary view of both groups.

One must concede that the publishers nowhere claim that this book is a work of ancient history. However, giving no doubt to its title and general appearance, it is likely to be found on the shelves of academic bookshelves and libraries. This is not where it belongs.

Communal constraints

By D. C. Coleman

DOUGLAS C. NORTII
Structure and Change in Economic History
228pp. W. W. Norton. \$19.95.
0 393 01478 9

Economic historians come in roughly two varieties. There are those who believe their subject to be a social science, mainly a branch of economics, and needing a plentiful supply of theory. And there are those who doubt if it is any sort of science, and getting along with their job without bothering much about the theoretical bases of what they are doing. American economic historians fall predominantly into the former category, most of their British counterparts into the latter.

There can be no question about the position of Douglas North, who is Professor of Economics at the University of Washington and a distinguished authority on American economic history. To him the task of the economic historian is to "explain the structure and performance of economies through time". He contends that economic historians have failed to do this properly because of the absence of a theory of institutional change, and the stated purpose of his latest book is to provide the elements of such a theory. He is no newcomer to this quest; indeed, for the past dozen or more years, singly or in co-operation with others, he has published a number of books and articles on this theme. In 1973 there appeared *The Rise of the West*.

ern World, no less. This offered just such a theoretical framework for Western Europe from 900 to 1700. The latest instalment has no such spatial limits, or, surprisingly, chronology. *Structure and Change in Economic History* runs from Neolithic Man to Microchip Man.

Part I of the book sets out the theory. In broad outline and in the author's chosen language it goes something like this. The neo-classical economic model of marginal adjustment in pursuit of individual utility maximization provides the best starting-point for an explanation of economic behaviour. But this model has a number of important defects. For example, it assumes that adjustment is frictionless (zero transaction costs and costlessly enforced property rights) and that private and social rates of return are equal. Moreover, it takes no account of the "free-rider problem", i.e. that some individuals do not act in accordance with the calculated self-interest which the model requires, but wait until group action secures a desired adjustment, and then receive the benefits. So something else is needed to give the neo-classical model greater relevance to observed behaviour.

The theory of institutional change which is to remedy this defect embraces the state, property rights, transaction costs, and ideology. The state specifies and enforces property rights only to the extent that they are consistent with the wealth-maximizing objectives of the ruler. So the state is essential for economic growth but it is also a source of economic instability. The fundamental institution of many economies, past and present, is the market; but participation in the market

involves transaction costs - measurement, information, compliance procedures, and the like. These can be lowered by the state, which defines and enforces the rules of the game, and may, for instance, permit the firm to function as a resource allocator. Thus economic organization is accounted for analytically by a theory of the state and a theory of transaction costs. But the "free-rider" dilemma remains and that cannot be explained without an explicit theory of ideology. Individuals sustain or change their ideological perspective or "world-view" according to its consistency or inconsistency with their experience. For example, an alteration in property rights giving rise to a sense of injustice may lead to a shift of ideology. Consequently ideology affects both decision-making within the market system and non-market resource allocation.

Part II provides an "explanation sketch" of world history, with the North theory applied to the basic economic juxtaposition of population and resources. "The First Economic Revolution" occurred some 10,000 years ago, when the development of settled agriculture in lieu of hunting and gathering replaced common property rights by exclusive property rights. The latter, by rewarding owners, provided a direct incentive to improve efficiency and to acquire more knowledge. This explains the rapid progress made by mankind thereafter. There follows a quick rundown of ancient Egypt, the Persian, Greek and Roman empires; the rise and decline of feudalism and the expansion of early modern Europe; the Industrial Revolution, America between 1789 and 1914, and the arrival of "The Second Economic Revolution". This brought the wed-

ding of science and technology; gave birth to automated machinery; new sources of energy and the fundamental transformation of matter; created "an elastic supply curve of new knowledge which built economic growth into the system"; and thereby made the underlying assumptions of neo-classical economics realizable.

The book ends with Part III, a brief chapter resoundingly entitled "A Theory of Institutional Change and the Economic History of the Western World". This defines institutions as "a set of rules, compliance procedures, and moral and ethical behavioural norms designed to constrain the behaviour of individuals in the interests of maximizing the wealth or utility of principals and ends by expressing the hope that economic history conceived as a theory of the evolution of constraints should not only explain past economic performance but also provide the modern social scientist with the evolving contextual framework within which to explain the current performance of political-economic systems".

Whether the conclusion follows directly from the premises may perhaps be questioned. But there can be no question that the expressed hope embodies the superhuman optimism needed to believe all this. Faith, indeed, is crucial, for the theory is never subjected to serious testing - if it ever can be. Instead the reader is often simply told that certain things happened because of different sorts of property rights, changes in transaction costs or varying ideological convictions. The evidence offered in Part II to suppose these particular interpretations is usually minimal or non-existent or sometimes simply wrong. At other times it is hard to suppress the nasty feeling that there is a good deal of familiar stuff here dressed up in special words; the "theory of ideology" is notably scotless. But it is all full of ingenuity, excited admiration for its sweep and verve, has the same genuine insights which were already evident in North's earlier publications (property rights do matter), and could certainly not be described as other than thought-provoking.

Dividing and ruling

By John Larner

SAMUEL KLINE COHN, JR.
The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence
311pp. Academic Press. \$55.
0 12 179180 7

The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence treats of that one-third to a half of the population of Florence whose labour made the city a leading manufacturing centre in the Renaissance period. Primarily directed to fellow specialists and with only a marginal interest in high culture, employing models and techniques derived from nineteenth and twentieth-century labour history, it is a work which comes much closer to the spirit of Eugene Genovese than that of Jacob Burckhardt.

Its thesis can be summarized briefly. In Florentine history, the years 1343-1383 were a time of intense social disturbance in which the *popolo minuto*, the artisans and labourers of the city, frequently broke out in violent protests against their conditions of life. This era culminated in (as some historians have it) the "Ciompi revolt" (or the "Ciompi revolt" as Samuel Kline Cohn prefers) "the organized workers' insurrection" of 1360. Moving on, however, to the period 1450-1530, we find an apparently peaceful coexistence of lower and upper strata. The author asks here what structures and relationships among patricians and workers conditioned the character of each period. His answer is that in the fourteenth century the workers faced a "medieval" state, one with conflicting eternal jurisdictional spheres where city-politicians depended upon local parish communities. In this period they established social networks extending beyond their own parishes to the whole city and were thus able to form a collective view of their role within it and take collective action in attempts to remedy their grievances.

By contrast, in the fifteenth century, largely as a result of "reaction" to the Ciompi revolt, the state, strengthened by the ideology of such "civic humanists" as Leonardo Bruni, had taken on a new power and had come to control a newly centralized police and court system which, though now indifferent to crimes committed by workers against workers, was able to punish effectively any lower-class assault upon superiors. At the same time the governing class, previously associated closely with their own neighbourhoods, came to form city-wide alliances and to see themselves above all as "citizens of Florence", united against threats from below.

This new union of the patriciate was matched by a working-class return to local-parish loyalties and an indifference to the wider community. United class-consciousness among the lower orders was further weakened by the immigration of non-Florentine and non-Italian (particularly German) workers into the city.

Dr Cohn's argument rests upon source-materials which, as always in dealing with societies of this period, are haphazard, partial, and difficult to use. Over half of his book is concerned with discussion of the surviving marriage-contracts from whose networks of association he deduces the patterns of workers' participation in the Ciompi revolt. How far he has been able to discover in them a truly representative sample of the *popolo minuto* is debatable. For the period 1343-83, for instance, the author defines "the poor" as those who dowered their daughters with fifty florins or less. This seems too high: day-labourers in the building trade in 1380 who were lucky enough to gain employment for all the working days of the year might earn the equivalent of some thirty-three florins per annum, most of which would go on food and rent. Did men like these normally give dowries of anything approaching fifty florins, or then lay out more money to have the dowry registered by a notary? On these points a fuller statistical breakdown and discussion of this group of contracts might have set the reader's mind at rest. So also might some further justification of the decision to raise this dowry standard to seventy florins in the fifteenth century. If it be true that such a leap in value occurred this in itself requires comment upon its significance.

In many ways the arguments about "networks of association" are the most convincing part of this work. After all, on Cohn's own evidence, large numbers of the poor still married outside their own district in the fifteenth century. There are other assertions here too which seem to force the evidence. That boys, for instance, frequently married the girl next door ("from the same parish") is taken to reveal "the magnitude of the dowry outside the parish is supposed, on the slenderest grounds, to indicate that 'savers' appear to have exerted a stronger pull". This said, and looking at the book as a whole, one is still left with a considerable respect for the enthusiasm, ingenuity, and courage with which Dr Cohn attacks problems of notorious difficulty. Since he has mastered the demanding art of reading notarial hand one would like to see him extend his inquiry into other fields - perhaps money-lending, or capitalization of small businesses, or charity - which might throw more light on this important, though still obscure, subject.

Viability of the Vikings

By Hilda Davidson

BRUCE E. GELSINGER
*Icelandic Enterprise
Commerce and Economy to the Middle Ages*
299pp. University of South Carolina Press.
0 87249 405 5

In the thirteenth century some thousands of men and women, mainly from Norway but some from elsewhere in Scandinavia, made new homes for themselves in Iceland. Their courage and determination in settling in a remote island have caught the imagination of many readers of the Icelandic sagas. From the beginning, Icelanders have gloried in their achievement, their law system and the Commonwealth which endured until 1264, and left much written evidence about their early history. This contrasts sharply with the poverty of early written records in the rest of Scandinavia, and some of the finest of the "family" sagas are virtually historical in the sense that they tell of the lives of the Icelanders who achieved so much in an apparently unpromising and barren land, reached by a long voyage over dangerous seas.

Certainly the climate was more favourable than it became later, but stormy blizzards, long winter darkness and volcanic eruptions have always been the Icelanders' lot, and the coastal region of the island is a lava desert. Increasing interest in the Viking Age, and excavations of market-places elsewhere in Scandinavia, as well as in Dublin and York, have increased our knowledge and curiosity about the economy which formed the backbone of Viking life. This book claims to deal with the "unusual and remarkable qualities of the Icelandic Commonwealth's foreign trade", and the author comments on the lack of any comprehensive treatment of the subject. He discusses how far the Icelanders could provide for themselves, and what they had to offer other countries which was, basically, large amounts of cheap woollen cloth, sulphur (unobtainable elsewhere in the North) and luxury goods such as furs and falcons.

He reviews what is known of taxes on merchants and commercial practices in general, weights and measures used in trading, and trade relations with Norway and other Scandinavian lands, with the Icelandic colony of Greenland and the islands of the North Atlantic. He outlines the sad story of deterioration which caused near-starvation in the thirteenth century and resulted in a decision by the King of Norway to forbid foreign trade up to the end of the Middle Ages, when dried fish became Iceland's chief export, inspiring a fifteenth-century poet to sum up the situation: "Of Ysland in 1774, Iyllt node, Save of Stokkfish".

This is a useful book which will be welcomed by those who want definite information about values of goods, taxes imposed by the Norwegian kings, Icelandic shipping and the like. But it hardly lives up to the claims made for it. Much of the material on the Commonwealth has already appeared in the excellent work *A History of the Old Icelandic Commonwealth* by Joo Jóhannesson, published in English by the University of Manitoba Press. Information, for instance, on the smelting of iron and methods of navigation used by early Scandinavian seamen is more clearly and ably presented there. In spite of claims that Bruce Gelsinger has used recent archaeological evidence, there is little of this, except a brief account of the merchant ships recovered from Roskilde Fjord. Evidence from the excavation of farms in Iceland and Greenland, as presented by Jóhannesson, Knud Krogh and others, has not been used. A detailed study of the economy of the sagas, as in *Bredal-Peasant in the Journal-Peasant Studies* of 1976, and the detailed biography there given, has gone unnoticed.

While remarks about the critical use of saga evidence to the introduction are sensible enough, undue weight is put on statements in the sagas without considering their context. For instance, the brilliant tale of the bandings at Roskilde farm in *Eyrbyggja Saga* begins with a witty account of the arrival of Thorgrunn, a mysterious woman from the Hebrides, with a splendid set of bed-clothes, including a silken quilt and English linen sheets. It is fair enough to take this as illustration of the

value set on such goods in Iceland, so that the greedy, spoli Thorgrunn at once rushes down to the ship and tries to persuade Thorgrunn to sell them. But it hardly justifies solemn speculation as to whether the owner of the vessel came from Ireland, the Hebrides or Scandinavia, the assumption that the silk and coloured cloth reached the Hebrides through Ireland, and the noting of this as a rare example of an Irish, trading ship, reaching Iceland. This particular tale is a superb piece of fiction, partly based on traditional rules for disposing of the dead and the bed-clothes on which they died, and can hardly be put on a level with annals or cargo-lists. There is even a further reference to gifts said to be given to Thorgrunn by Leif in another saga, which she seems to have to barter possession when she dies. This is evidence for some link between the sagas, but hardly justifies Gelsinger's assumption that "Leif had loaded his ship with similar goods to trade in Norway". Nor can a reference to an Icelandic bringer back a sword called Mail-Biter from Constantinople warrant the assumption that he may have been able to earn enough from trade to purchase it and brought back other swords to Iceland to sell at a profit.

The sagas were carefully analysed by early German scholars who believed implicitly in their reliability as historical documents, and they collected all possible references to trade. The evidence they produced might have been used more profitably here, for instance to solve the problem of what kind of men obtained ships to trade abroad, which is raised in the course of the book but not satisfactorily solved. Or to tackle another interesting question: when such huge quantities of woven cloth were produced in Iceland, how was this weaving organized? Gudrun's words to her husband, returned from killing his loved foster-brother at her prompting, "I have spun yarn for twelve ells of homespun, and you have killed Kjaran". There is no attempt in this book to discuss what part was played by the women in providing Iceland's chief export, which assured the survival of the Commonwealth for so long. It seems that the last word has by no means been said here concerning the commerce and economy of Iceland.

Doing the groundwork

By John Coventry

GERALD O'COLLINS:

Fundamental Theology
283pp. Darton, Longman and Todd,
£5.95.
0 232 51522 0

Fundamental theology examines the ground on which the systematic and dogmatic stands, delimits the nature of its enterprise, the tools he uses, the criteria he should apply. Dr Gerald O'Collins has in the past written a number of less substantial books on such subjects as revelation, dogma, teaching authority. It is of great value to have from him a more comprehensive, deeper and more thorough work on a subject he has long studied.

Fundamental Theology is felicitously written and produced at a very modest price. It is intended primarily for Roman Catholic theological students, and therefore relates principally to Vatican II and to earlier landmarks common to Catholics, while showing constant awareness of other Christian traditions, authors and insights. The various pieces of the jigsaw—revelation, faith, doctrine, philosophy, scripture, inspiration, tradition, etc.—are carefully analysed and fitted together, and the whole is set out in orderly chapters, sections and sub-sections. The coherence of the book rests on the general analysis of experience with which it starts. One may disagree here and there, but at the same time recognize the great value of such a well-organized and inclusive study.

One may disagree here and there. Perhaps because he is teaching at the Gregorian University, Fr O'Collins, SJ, tries to preserve as far as he can traditional elements which have long outlived any usefulness they may once have had. When Vincent of Lerins has been put to death by a thousand qualifications, one longs to read that he was a silly old true-blue reactionary whose famous canon "Catholic truth is that which has

been believed everywhere, always and by everyone" meant that he did not want any new ideas at any price.

Again, O'Collins sticks closely to the idea that "biblical inspiration is rather than speak" when his own principles and proves redundant: there is no revelation without faith; it would be meaningless to talk of a God-inspired prophet to whom no one then or later paid any attention; a biblical writer speaks for and to a community, and the community's response is an integral part of "inspiration", the work of the Spirit in guiding verbal expression. In Matthew's work of a community, progressively shaping material for instruction and preaching in their own concrete situation, than of any author in the modern sense. Again, O'Collins clings to a too hard and fast distinction between foundational and dependent revelation which he has used in earlier writings: revelation in the apostolic age, which closed definitively, and the subsequent process of Christian revelation depending on it. The distinction is useful in broad general terms for understanding how revelation works, but not as applied to the New Testament. "The apostolic age" is far too loose a concept; much of the New Testament reflects the Christian thinking and interaction of those who had not known Jesus in his life on earth, and who developed after the death of any who had known him: is this later layer foundational or dependent? One shades off into the other. Again, in his treatment of "acts of God" the author does not adequately make out the case that anything happens beyond the more heightened and perceptive awareness of the human being affected: ie, God acts upon or reacts with man's spirit.

More radical grounds for criticism are to be found in the chapter "Christ and Non-Christians". Take the following: "Through his incarnation Christ moved into an historical solidarity with all human beings, as well as with the created world. He entered history to become everyone and the focus of the universe."

Perhaps this is why there are so few books published in Britain giving a personal insight into religious experience. Such works are common on the Continent, particularly in France, Switzerland and Germany. These books very often take the form of novels, autobiographies, plays, poetry and essay-diaries somewhat similar to the Japanese *zuihitsu* form—an attempt to combine minute observation of daily life, contemplative prose and poetry and philosophical self-examinations, often in the form of aphorisms. Examples of this kind of undogmatic mystical speculation in refined, sensitive literary style have been produced by writers as different as Charles Combazulzer (*Dieu Demain*), Conrad Deirez (*Le Drapeau de Dieu*), L'Herbe (*Le brin de paille*), Robert Escarpit (*Lettre ouverte à Dieu*), Paul Evdokimov (*L'Amour du Dieu*), almost all the works of Elies Csejtei, and the very remarkable oeuvre of the Austrian Thomas Bernhard.

The Romanian dissident Petru Dumitriu, now living in exile in "free" Europe, is another such writer. He was born in 1924 in the small Danubian village of Bazias, entailed some abatement of technicalities on both sides.

Gilson avoids the first danger more successfully than the second. Despite his assertion that "the book does not presuppose knowledge of formal logic", both its philosophical and its biblical components are engaged in close technical discussion with other scholars, and thus impose considerable demands on any reader who lacks the author's own unusual combination of interests and qualifications. His criticism of J. J. M. Roberts is a particularly opaque example, but not an isolated one.

Errors of detail are few and often insignificant. "Intelle" (p 15) "exagger" (p 29) and "crystalline" (p 207) are not in my dictionary, and the name of C. R. Taber is consistently spelled as if he were a mountain. J. A. T. Robinson's *Reading the New Testament* is concerned with the dates of New Testament books, not manuscripts; a criticism of another book by J. A. T. Robinson rests partly on a misquotation.

The author's argument is nevertheless timely, useful, and generally persuasive. Careful logical analysis can indeed lead to better theological formulations, and even to better translations of biblical texts. Of particular importance are Gilson's exploration of the distinction between sense and reference; his handling of the slippery question of intention; his treatment of the surprisingly complex matter of proper names, including why and his joyful pursuit of the root fallacy. He is perhaps at his best in detailed discussion, for example of Old Testament synonyms and the language of covenant. If, at the end of the day, we do not know much more, we already knew from Fr Barr: at least we know more clearly why we know it. And that it all is good.

Hereafter to know God through other men and women and through the world would be to know God through the inanimate Christ. To speak of Christ becoming man is surely an egregious slip. Echoes of platonism in modern jargon do not actually explain anything at all if the God whom all men encounter in their human experience is in fact a Trinitarian God, and if the Word of Wisdom of God became man in Jesus at a particular point of history, the age-old problems of soteriology about Christ being the saviour of all men remain, and are not answered by vague phrases or metaphors. If, for instance, all men do not meet, or encounter, or somehow experience Christ in their lives, then Christ is not the saviour of all men, but only God is, who became incarnate in Christ and was so revealed to some men. And even for these, Christ is not their saviour: if he is not

experienced by them. How can you love a person you do not meet (experience)? And yet O'Collins's own basis and treatment demand that he should make the experience of Christ central to his pattern. There are hints, but they are not followed up. If they had been, the whole ligaw would have been shaken and would have fitted together differently. The author analyses fully the dynamics of knowing-hoping-loving in the context of personal relation to Christ, but never explains how I can have a personal relation to Christ; how it differs from a commitment to a person I simply know about; how difference is awareness of the God who long ago communicated himself in Christ from here-and-now awareness of the Christ in whom God communicates himself.

O'Collins admits that there are some areas of fundamental theology

which he has not treated. He accepts the "high" or inflated New Testament views of Christ as a datum of theology; it is surely part of the task of fundamental theology to justify them—admittedly a very taxing task. He does not treat in any depth or detail the serious question how and in what sense the Old Testament can be a vehicle of revelation for a Christian. He does not face the question (put by Christopher Evans) whether the whole idea of "holiness" may not be a big mistake. It is an idea of intertestamental Judaism not shared by the community and the individual writers who, by a constant process of revision and addition, produced the Old Testament.

Perhaps we can look forward after a few years to a revised and enlarged edition of this substantial and valuable work.

Out of the desert

By James Kirkup

PETRU DUMITRIU:

Au Dieu inconnu
219pp. Paris: Saul.

Theology in Britain is something of a closed shop, like religion: the professionals do not look kindly upon amateur outsiders, and for the most part view with horror the ordinary layman's ventures into mysticism and revelation. Theologians in particular are stern guardians of their own views of faith and dogma, and are often the most daunting and in-burnt of religious interpreters—we have no Hans Küng, who was persecuted for the breadth and humanity of his views.

Perhaps this is why there are so few books published in Britain giving a personal insight into religious experience. Such works are common on the Continent, particularly in France, Switzerland and Germany. These books very often take the form of novels, autobiographies, plays, poetry and essay-diaries somewhat similar to the Japanese *zuihitsu* form—an attempt to combine minute observation of daily life, contemplative prose and poetry and philosophical self-examinations, often in the form of aphorisms. Examples of this kind of undogmatic mystical speculation in refined, sensitive literary style have been produced by writers as different as Charles Combazulzer (*Dieu Demain*), Conrad Deirez (*Le Drapeau de Dieu*), L'Herbe (*Le brin de paille*), Robert Escarpit (*Lettre ouverte à Dieu*), Paul Evdokimov (*L'Amour du Dieu*), almost all the works of Elies Csejtei, and the very remarkable oeuvre of the Austrian Thomas Bernhard.

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The eschatological framework of New Testament thought, inherited from contemporary Judaism, has long been a major concern of biblical scholarship and likewise a problem for would-be interpreters of the thought of the Bible into a modern context. Attention has tended to concentrate on the temporal aspects of eschatology, so that it is salutary to be reminded of the strong spiritual ingredient in the apocalyptic thought

and started writing essays, in French, at the age of thirteen. During the Second World War, he was studying philosophy in Germany. On his return to Romania, he became part of the movement of Socialist Realism and its writers received many awards of merit. He became a reporter, edited a review, and was head of a state publishing house, though he was a communist without a party card. Disillusioned by the Iron Curtain régime (a disillusionment well described in this book), he fled to the West, where he has lived since 1960, writing again in French; his 1962 novel, *Inconnu*, is outstanding.

Then, around 1969, under the pressures and depressions of exile and an alien culture, he stopped writing. *Au Dieu inconnu* is the result of more than ten years of silence, during which he has meditated deeply upon the nature of God, and the possibility of belief in God. His writing, in a vigorous, slaphappy style, rich with philosophical allusions and illuminating quotations from his vast reading, all presented with an easy scholarship, fits five chapters on the nature of evil are among the finest I have ever read on this intractable theme.

It was his questioning of the existence of God, and his exploration of personal solitude of soul and spirit that first attracted me to Dumitriu; as one who, like so many others, had experienced the desolation of encountering total silence when trying to enter into conversation with God. The tragic words of Christ, upon the cross—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—are a constant theme in this book. But it was the vivid autobiographical scenes from the author's childhood on a farm beside the Danube that moved me most, and drew me effortlessly into even his most recalcitrant contemplations. I was reminded so often of my own childhood experiences of good and evil, of loneliness, friendlessness, poverty and desperation in the face of a hostile world.

Dumitriu addresses himself to many of the nightmare problems of our modern world, relates them to his own spiritual struggles, and gives us no easy solutions to our nuclear dilemma. But his whole book is one that shines with the curiously happy radiance of a mind exercising itself freely, with the grace and the mastery, in a superb athlete of the emotions. Its final message is one of joy, hope and faith. It left me remembering the words of "another great spiritual dissident," Solzhenitsyn: "Prayers are like those appeals of ours. Either they don't get through or they're returned with 'rejected' scrawled across them."

direct and close relation to heaven where he reigns in triumph, by virtue of their life "in him". Nevertheless, this is not for Paul an other-worldly doctrine. Rather, it is full of implications for the moral life in this world, including 3 indicates. Paul gives some comfort to those at the present day, who, abandoning traditional ideas and images, view faith in terms of a sense of transcendence—within: a purely earthly existence.

This well-organized book breaks little fresh ground, as its author admits, but it is a useful realignment of the evidence. Through a detailed consideration of the relevant passages, it demonstrates a uniformity of outlook on eschatology in all the Pauline letters. Including the disputed Colossians and Ephesians, the variations in Paul's teaching result from his need to respond to the different challenges posed by those to whom he writes.

In outline, therefore, Lenz's new

Drinking mystically, travelling sentimentally

By Geoffrey Hosking

BENEDICT EROFEEV:

Moscow Circles

Translated by J. R. Dorrell

188pp. Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative. £6.95.

0 906495 26 1

Some time in the early 1970s a mysterious, ill-typed *smuzhka* text circulated in Moscow, recounting the drunken and abortive attempts of one Benny Erofeev to complete a simple two-hour train journey from Moscow's Kursk Station to the suburban town of Petushki. In its outward form it resembled Alexander Radishchev's *Journey from St Petersburg to Moscow*, the famous late eighteenth-century tract which castigated the abuses of autocracy and serfdom by recounting the stages of a journey between Russia's two principal cities. To all appearances, however, this form had been chosen only for the sake of parody: Radishchev's sober seriousness, and the documentary meticulousness of his recording of social conditions, were replaced in Erofeev by drunken meanderings, snatches of incoherent conversation, story-telling, dreams and internal monologue. There was a good deal of effective satire and wordplay, but it did not seem to add up to very much. Naturally, no Soviet publisher would look at it. What is more interesting is that no émigré publisher would either. Erofeev's mock-sentimental journey appeared only in an obscure Russian-language journal in Israel—where it was promptly ceased publication.

Realization of the omnipresence of evil, and the ache of solitude and silence, came to Dumitriu at an early age. He had a violent, militant father, an ineffective mother. Life on a farm soon taught him man's inhumanity to man, and, even more, man's cruelty to his fellow-creatures, the beasts of the field. As he grew older, he tried to harden his heart, to be completely armoured against the horror of human existence in a totalitarian society more cruel than any farm or abattoir. He ruthlessly pushed his way to the top in a supposedly "socialist" and egalitarian world that was in fact opportunistic and bourgeois, anti-religion and anti-emotion.

How he broke away from that stultifying spiritual desert and found his way back to the West, to God, and to a "freedom" that he discovered was after all only relative, even in France, is the great theme of this work. We are not spared the humiliations, the disillusionments and the bitterness that were his lot at the hands of supposedly "free" men in the West. But he is rescued from self-destruction through the concern and guidance of a French priest whose ideal intellectual and human qualities make him, for Dumitriu, the ideal spiritual friend and teacher many of us long for, and never find.

Dumitriu addresses himself to many of the nightmare problems of our modern world, relates them to his own spiritual struggles, and gives us no easy solutions to our nuclear dilemma. But his whole book is one that shines with the curiously happy radiance of a mind exercising itself freely, with the grace and the mastery, in a superb athlete of the emotions. Its final message is one of joy, hope and faith. It left me remembering the words of "another great spiritual dissident," Solzhenitsyn: "Prayers are like those appeals of ours. Either they don't get through or they're returned with 'rejected' scrawled across them."

Ulrich's collapse temporarily paralyses his relationship with, in particular, his girl-friend, a pleasant but unremarkable, insecure librarian called Nora. She is not prepared to confront the disability whose onset she has witnessed since the "accident" accompany Ulrich when the ambulance arrives, and by the time she plucks up the self-assurance to visit him in hospital he has given his attendants the slip and, still unable to speak, hobbled off in search of her. The inhibitions which might account for Nora's behaviour are not easily identified—though some apparently derive from the memory of a former lover whom she looked after during his final illness—not is it clear just what enables her eventually to overcome them. But over come them she somehow does, and the reunited couple are last seen—she back in his hospital bed, she holding his hand—looking expectantly in the same direction: someone is knocking on the sick-room door.

In outline, therefore, Lenz's new

It has taken ten years for this intriguing text to reach the English-speaking public (though many excellent works take longer). Re-reading it now, I feel much more certain that it is a very important piece of work, and I doubt whether the Radishchev parallel has a merely parodic function. Abram Terts once remarked: "The Russian people drinks not from hardship or misery, but from an unending need for the extreme and the miraculous—they drink mystically, if you like, striving to draw the soul from its earthly equilibrium and restore it to its blissful disembodied state." Benny's journey seems an almost emblematic confirmation of this statement. Like one of Vasily Aksyonov's early heroes, he is on a quest for light and love, carrying gifts for his sweetheart and small son, "Petushki is the place where birds never cease singing, day and night, where the jasmine blooms winter and summer. Original sin... does not burden anyone there." What gives Benny his simple faith in Petushki is alcohol, and it is also alcohol which prevents him from ever arriving there. Drink is the great liberator and the great destroyer, and this book is the celebration of its glories and miseries.

First of all, drink reasserts man's spiritual freedom against the tyranny of matter and of planning in Soviet society. (The English language provides an unexpected bonus here, in that the word "spirit" also has an alcoholic ring in addition to its basic meaning.) By means of drink, the repressive fictions of Soviet life are given a liberating meaning. When Benny becomes a foreman of the cable-layers at Sheremetev Airport, he re-enacts Soviet

labour discipline in a new form, drawing up a "drinking plan", with its own time-table of "specialist obligations". What the tea-break is to Longbridge, the "vodka break" is to Sheremetev: the same informal fraternization, in time which is stolen from the bosses, gradually extended till it takes over the whole working day. "Oh, what freedom and equality! What fraternity and free-loading! Free of shame and idle care, we lived a life that was purely spiritual."

Similarly, in the trains, lonely travellers make each other's acquaintance by sharing their bottles or trying to steal them from one another. Company and culture are brought into drab lives. The passengers hold forth on Goethe and Turgenyev, Gogol and Sartre, Indira Gandhi and Moshe Dayan, indeed, in their inebriated bonhomie seem to regard them as intimate associates. Even the ticket collector gives up trying to collect fines, and instead demands one gram of vodka per kilometre from those travelling without a ticket, thus "strengthening his links with the masses".

So drink takes over the functions of labour discipline, socialist planning, social cohesion, fraternity, equality, and everything else that holds men together in society. There is an element of inverted Socialist Realism in all this, as well as of inverted Radishchev. Benny's journey burlesques the quest of the positive hero, with his sure sense of direction, his confidence in the future, his iron self-control. "One must live one's life in such a way as not to get one's cocktail recipes muddled", Benny proclaims, parodying the final reflections of Pavel Korshagin, one

of the most admired Stalinist heroes of the 1930s.

But if drink sustains and inspires Benny, it is also his ruin. Surveying the motley collection of bottles with which he departs from Moscow, he exclaims: "Lord, you see before you the sum of my possessions. But is this what I need? Is this the object of my soul's desire?" To which the Lord replies: "Do you think St Theresa needed her stigmata?" Drink is the sign of Benny's martyrdom. Because of it he sleeps through Petushki (so at least we presume), and gets carried back in the darkness in Moscow. Here, stumbling around, half hoping he is really in Petushki, he fetches up against the walls of the Kremlin, citadel of the real equality and fraternity of Soviet society. Significantly, though he has been through Moscow many times in his journeyings, Benny has never before actually seen the Kremlin: it exists, as it were, on a different plane of reality from that which he has always inhabited. And there, under its walls, he is attacked by his four previous room-mates, envious philis-

times who had resented his flights of fantasy, his personal reticence, his sense of being a bit different. (The identity of his four assailants is not made absolutely clear, and the translator believes that they are the "great quartet", Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, whose continuing power is exercised from inside those walls; though his theory would transmute Benny's death into the realm of pure fantasy, which I think unwarranted.)

Using drink as a tool of sociological observation, as a satirical device, a means of liberation and an instrument of tragedy, Erofeev has written one of the most remarkable of recent Russian novels, a memorable distillation of *la condition humaine* in a totalitarian society. Would that we knew more about its author. From the publisher's account, he is a personality very like Benny, an intellectual expelled from university for his unorthodox ideas, and living from casual jobs on construction sites. One wonders whether we shall hear more from him; or whether he has shared Benny's fate.

Better than one

By Peter France

JACQUES GODOUBOUT:

Les têtes à Papineau

156pp. Paris: Seuil.

2 02 006025 6

A two-headed *Québécois*, Charles and François Papineau, write (s) his/their thoughts and recall (s) his/their past while he/they await (s) the operation which will cut each of the two heads in half, and by joining a right half to a left half produce a normal Canadian. The normal Canadian turns out, of course, to be English-speaking (since the French language was unfortunately in the discarded left half), and this French-language novel ends with a brief letter in graceful English by the newly unified Charles F. Papineau, who has gone to work in computers at Vancouver.

The symbolism is obvious: this is another stage in Jacques Godoubout's exploration—one shared by many of his compatriots—of what it is to be "celui qui parle français en Amérique". The French Canadian is an oddity, a frog (frog prince perhaps), because "in the Anglophone ocean everything that does not saxon ('tout ce qui ne saxonne') is a bête noire". He is a monster, divided against himself, a biphosphorus, bicultural, bilingual monster. And as such he is naturally richer than the monoglot English Canadians who are the villains of the piece with their computers and their modern surgery.

It is an old theme adapted to a difficult modern situation. The outlook here seems more desperate than in most of Godoubout's earlier work, but as before the manner is largely humorous. The blurb promises "un livre cocasse et tendre, où l'on retrouve l'ironie ravageuse de l'auteur de *Salut Galarneau*". It is true that there is a fair amount of word-play and that the subject itself is fertile in bizarre episodes, but compared with the earlier work, it all comes across rather half-heartedly. It is as if the author had deliberately opted for an inconsequential manner, perhaps to set off the monstrosity of the matter, but *Les têtes à Papineau* is no *Métemorphoses*. It reads easily; the story is unusual enough in all conscience; but the book does not slink in the mind.

Boys' own Fascism

By John Gatt-Rutter

TULLIO KEZICH:

Il campeggio di Dödtoghlann

72pp. Studio Test. L4.500.

What was it like to grow up under Fascism? Tullio Kezich's autobiography gives us the experience of Fascism as perceived by a naive child, but acutely perceived, reconstructed from adult memory. He registers the intimate relationship between political ideology and a young boy's psychology in this account of one day and night in the life of an eleven-year-old Trieste boy in the summer of 1939—the first day and night he has spent away from his family at a "Fascist" youth camp on the Slav-populated Carso plateau (the above Trieste). The young Paolo, the Slav-populated Carso plateau, the name, is this caught up in even camp as an initiation to the values

which Fascism appears to promise—manhood, adventure, personal prestige. It turns out to be a paltry and squalid affair: pseudo-military discipline, bullying by the older boys and equally mindless puerile antics by the younger ones.

Paolo is no better than the rest, and Kezich mercilessly lays bare his petulance and inability to confront any situation; Paolo prefers to sham sleep or sickness and to indulge in shame-faced "fantasies", variously "mawkish or vengeful". This is the Fascist ideology as internalized by an eleven-year-old, alternately, loud-mouthed and wheedling. Kezich renders it with a sober resourcefulness of style, ranging from intricate succession of subordinate clauses to the swift flow of interior monologue to the egregious barnyard colloquialism. Paolo's oppression of the local Slav population adds a special Trieste flavour. Rancovich, with the above Trieste. The young Paolo, the Slav-populated Carso plateau, the name, is this caught up in even camp as an initiation to the values

The Refugee

After Europe, all winter the days rushed through me as if I were dead, the brown sea pouring into the cities at night, the rain-smell of fish,

and when you ask for my story, how we came to be blown along your dock-streets, pocked and scuffed, in rags, I remember only the last hot light at the railside.

How to make you imagine our square and streets, the glass like falls of water, the gold-leaf in the opera houses, there were summer birds golden as weeds,

the scent of coffee and halva rising from marble tables, and on dark afternoons the trains grinding on wet rails round the corners of plaster palaces

such a babble of Empire now extinguished, we can never go home, Dido, only ghosts remain to know that we exist.

Elaine Feinstein